

Let noble thoughts come to us from all sides

Lead us from darkness unto Light

(A compact spiritual guide book for
disciples, seekers, aspirants
as well as general readers)

Volume - 1

Swami Chidananda Saraswati

Compiled by
Mohan Lal Agrawal

First edition 2017

Author : Swami Chidananda Saraswati

Compiler : Mohan Lal Agrawal

Publisher : Mohan Lal Agrawal
At. Kansari Para, P.O/Dist. Bolangir
(Orissa), PIN - 767001

Computer Setting & Cover Page Design :
Jayashree Printers,
At:-Old Palace Road,
P.O/Dist:- Bolangir
(Odisha), PIN - 767 001

Printed by : Graphiscreen
1144, Nayapalli, Bhubaneswar-12
Ph.: 9437284342

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First edition 2017 - 1,000 copies

Published on the most auspicious occasion of
celebration of The Holy 101st Birth Date of Most
Worshipful Sadgurudev Shri Swami Chidanandaji
Maharaj on the 24th September 2017 for distribution
as Shri Gurudev's Prasad.

PUBLISHER'S NOTE

This compact book of compilation contains the select writings of Most Worshipful Sadgurudev Shri Swami Chidanandaji Maharaj on different topics such as vedic culture, real identity of human beings, true purpose of human life, guru's grace, yoga, vedanta, divine name, divine life, yoga at the home, satsanga, svadhyaya, control of mind, sadhana, unity of religions and world peace, based on a structured and comprehensive theme on living the spiritual life for the purpose of attainment of the supreme goal of human life, i.e. Self-realisation or God-realisation or Moksha. The topics "guru's grace" and "sadhana" include a large number of writings as more knowledge on these two topics is most vital for spiritual disciples treading the path of God-realisation.

The spiritual teachings of Most Worshipful Sadgurudev Shri Swami Chidanandaji Maharaj are simple, lucid, practical, greatly illuminating, life transforming, highly inspiring and profoundly appealing. These teachings are so unique that Holy Master, Most Worshipful Sadgurudev Shri Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj says about such teachings - "His lectures must be printed in gold". In view of the same, His disciples can derive immense benefits by studying His teachings contained in this book and practising the same in their day-to-day life.

These teachings are also universal in scope and therefore, we trust that all other spiritual disciples, seekers and aspirants as well as the general readers, irrespective of their faith, belief, sect, cast, creed, religion, nationality, etc., can derive great benefits by studying the same.

We firmly believe that the spiritual teachings contained in these writings are sure to lead us from

darkness unto Light. With such firm belief and with immense pleasure, we have the rare, golden opportunity and unique privilege of most humbly presenting this book of compilation in the hands of the spiritual disciples, aspirants, seekers and general readers for their immense benefits, on the most auspicious occasion of celebration of the 101st Holy Birth Date of Most Worshipful Sadgurudev Shri Swami Chidanandaji Maharaj on the 24th September 2017.

The 24th September 2017

Publisher

COMPILER'S NOTE

Our ancient scriptures and our saints and sages say that the goal of human life is liberation of the soul or union of the individual soul with the Supreme Soul, which is known as Self-realisation or God-realisation or Moksha. This goal comes from the fact that a human being is neither his body nor his mind but the immortal soul, which is a part of the Supreme Soul, the God; and therefore, it is quite natural for the individual soul to tend to march ahead in the direction in which it can get united or merged with the Supreme Soul, its source and origin. With attainment of liberation of the soul by the human beings, the process of evolution in the God's creation, which commences from the inanimate stones and mountains to the animate, living plants and trees, insects and animals, and ultimately to human beings, gets completed. With this also, human beings derive permanent happiness and eternal peace, and all their sorrows and sufferings come to a permanent end. This goal is the supreme goal of human life or the greatest grand object of aspiration of human life according to our great, glorious, lofty, unique and ideal ancient culture, which is called Vedic Culture or Bharatiya Sanskruti.

God, The Creator, has very graciously given us the rare human birth, after having undergone births in 84 lakhs species of life, for attainment of this supreme goal of life in this very human birth (Moksha Prapti), besides experiencing the fruits of the actions of their past births, both good and bad (prarabdha karmaphala bhoga). Human beings are the crown of God's creation and they alone, amongst all the 84 lakhs species of life, have been endowed with the capability to attain liberation of their soul. Human birth is, therefore, a very precious gift of God to us. In view of the same, human beings ought to live their life wisely with making utmost endeavours for achievement of the aforesaid supreme goal of life, simultaneously with working for their physical existence and day-to-day living upon the earth plane.

Guidance from a Sadguru, who knows the path to God-realisation and also who himself has travelled the said path and reached the destination, or in other words, who himself has attained God-realisation, is necessary for human beings to commence their spiritual journey and march ahead in the path of God-realisation as shown by the Sadguru. Together with the Sadguru's guidance/ instructions, His grace is also necessary for the disciples to attain God-realisation. And Sadguru's grace comes to the disciples only when the latter obey His instructions fully, implicitly and willingly; and continue to perform their spiritual sadhana sincerely and diligently according to the Sadguru's instructions.

The Sadguru gives instructions to His disciples on yoga, vedanta such as Karma Yoga, Bhakti Yoga, Raj Yoga or Jnana Yoga, etc., depending upon the nature and attitude of each individual disciple. Japa Yoga (Bhakti Yoga) is said as the easiest, simplest, quickest, safest and surest Yoga in this Iron Age or Kali Yuga and is well suited to the vast majority of the people of this age. Therefore, the Sadguru initiates most of his disciples into Japa Yoga, the practice of which leads them to attain God-realisation easily. The disciples do japa of the mantra of their respective Chosen Deity (Istha Devata), as has been given to them by the Sadguru during mantra-initiation, generally in the morning and evening hours.

The Sadguru advises His disciples to simultaneously live the divine life through out the day so that the time and activities beyond the limited morning and evening hours of Japa Yoga sadhana is also utilised as spiritual sadhana for God-realisation. This leads to quick attainment of the goal of life, i.e. God-realisation.

The Sadguru further exhorts His disciples to regularly attend satsanga and perform svadhyaya so that the disciples can remain spiritually charged throughout the day amidst the

powerful influence of maya or of the worldly life; and also that they can draw inspiration, encouragement and mental strength from satsanga and svadhyaya to carry on their spiritual sadhana regularly and that too, earnestly, sincerely, faithfully, devoutly and effectively.

The Sadguru also advises His disciples that they can live the spiritual life simultaneously while living the domestic life and that they need not renounce or leave their household secular life and take sannyasa to live the spiritual life. He, therefore, gives them guidance on the manner of discharging their worldly/secular duties and responsibilities of domestic life as part of their yoga sadhana while simultaneously performing their spiritual sadhana proper. He also guides them how to practise yoga at the home.

The Sadguru advises His disciples to perform their spiritual practices or sadhana regularly, perseveringly, sincerely, devoutly and effectively till they achieve the goal of life and attain God-realisation. Performance of sadhana in accordance with the Sadguru's instructions is very, very vital for the disciples. Therefore, the Sadguru attaches great emphasis on performance of spiritual sadhana, guides His disciples on various aspects of such sadhana and advises them time and again to carry on their spiritual sadhana regularly, perseveringly, sincerely, devoutly and diligently. Thus, spiritual sadhana assumes great significance in the life of the spiritual disciples and they ought to perform their spiritual sadhana regularly, persistently, sincerely, devoutly, diligently and effectively, in full, implicit and willing obedience of the instructions of their Sadguru.

Human mind is said to be the cause of bondage or liberation of the soul from the cycle of births and deaths. Therefore, the Sadguru shows the ways to the disciples to control the mind and make it cooperative and sadhana-friendly

so that their spiritual sadhana is carried on smoothly and effectively and they proceed quickly in the path of God-realisation.

We carry on our personal spiritual sadhana persistently for attaining liberation of our soul, which is for our own self and for our own benefit. Simultaneously, we, as members of the society and as citizens of the nation and of the world, ought to contribute towards religious unity and world peace, which are the dire necessities of the present day world. The Sadguru, therefore, gives guidance to us on how to make our individual contribution towards the religious unity and world peace.

Based on the above theme, some select writings of our Most Worshipful Sadgurudev Shri Swami Chidanandaji Maharaj on different topics, such as vedic culture, real identity of human beings, true purpose of human life, guru's grace, yoga, vedanta, divine name, divine life, yoga at the home, satsanga, svadhyaya, control of mind, spiritual sadhana, religious unity and world peace have been taken out from His books published by the Divine Life Society and reproduced in this book for the ready-guidance of the disciples; and for sincere practice of the spiritual teachings contained in these writings in their daily life, in letter and spirit, for their supreme good i.e. to achieve the great goal of human life by attaining God-realisation in their very present human birth.

This is a compact spiritual guide book. Therefore, for further details/guidance on different topics covered in this book, the readers may kindly study the various books of Most Worshipful Sadgurudev Shri Swami Chidanandaji Maharaj.

The 24th September 2016,

The Swami Chidananda Birth Centenary Date. Compiler

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I record my deep sense of gratitude to His Holiness Sri Swami Padmanavanandaji Maharaj, General Secretary, the Divine Life Society, Rishikesh, for benevolently granting me the kind permission of the Divine Life Trust Society for reproducing / quoting the writings of Most Worshipful Sadgurudev Sri Swami Chidanandaji Maharaj form the books, souvenirs, magazines, etc. published by the Divine Life Society. I beg to convey my deepest sense of heart-felt, reverential gratitude to His Holiness Sri Swami Vimalanandaji Maharaj, President, the Divine Life Society, Rishikesh for his kind grace, blessing, inspiration and encouragement showered upon me for compilation and publication of this book. I also convey my heart-felt, reverential gratitude to Dr. Madhusudan Pati, Retd. Professor and Head of the Department of English, Sambalpur University, Sambalpur for his kind blessing bestowed upon me as well as encouragement given to me for this compilation work.

I extend my sincere thanks to M/S Jayashree Printers, Bolangir, with Binny and Saukin, for nice computer setting and beautiful cover design; and M/S Graphiscreen, Bhubaneswar and their team of workers for nice printing of this book.

The 24th September 2017

Compiler

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Guru Stotra

(Sri Guru Gita)

गुरुब्रह्मा गुरुर्विष्णुर्गुरुर्देवो महेश्वरः ।

गुरुरेव परं ब्रह्म तस्मै श्रीगुरवे नमः ॥

58. Guru is Brahma, Guru is Vishnu. Guru is God Mahesvara. Guru alone is verily the Supreme Brahman. Therefore prostrations to him (the Guru).

अज्ञानतिमिराऽस्य ज्ञानांजनशलाकया ।

चक्षुरुन्मीलितं येन तस्मै श्रीगुरवे नमः ॥

59. I prostrate to that Guru who shows the supreme state of Brahman by the collyrium of knowledge to one who is blinded by the cataract of Ajnana (absence of knowledge).

ज्ञानशक्तिसमारुद्धतत्वमालाविभूषणे ।

भुक्तिमुक्तिप्रदात्रे च तस्मै श्रीगुरवे नमः ॥

74. He who is established in knowledge and power, who is adorned with the garland of Truth, the Reality, one who bestows both liberation and enjoyment here in this world, to that Guru, be this salutations.

यस्य स्मरणमात्रेण ज्ञानमुत्पद्यते स्वयम् ।

स एव सर्वसम्पत्तिः तस्मात्सम्पूजयेदगुरम् ॥

55. By the mere remembrance of whom knowledge (of Self) dawns in one automatically; he (the Guru) is one's entire wealth. Therefore, the aspirant should (ever) worship his Guru.

ध्यानमूलं गुरोर्मूर्तिः पूजामूलं गुरोः पदम् ।

मन्त्रमूलं गुरोर्वक्यं मुक्तिमूलं गुरोः कृपा ॥

86. The background (of thought) for meditation is the

form of the Guru, the image for worship is the Guru's Feet, the sacred syllable (Mantra) for Japa is the words of the Guru and the cause of Moksha is the grace of Guru.

गुरुध्यानं तथा कृत्वा स्वयं ब्रह्मपयो भवेत् ।
पिण्डे पदे तथा रूपे मुक्तास्ते नात्र संशयः ॥

167. One should, by practising meditation on the Guru, become Brahmamaya (attain Brahmic consciousness) while in this body (staying here itself) and attain the highest state of emancipation. Such a person is a freed soul. There is no doubt about this.

ज्ञानं विना मुक्तिपदं लभ्यते गुरुभक्तिः ।
गुरोः प्रसादतो नान्यत् साधनं गुरुमार्गिणाम् ॥

101. By the devotion practised towards the Guru, one attains the state of Mukti even without knowledge. For those who tread the path of unflinching devotion to the Guru, no other Sadhana is needed than the grace of the Guru (Guru Prasada).

अज्ञानमूलहरणं जन्मकर्मनिवारकम् ।
ज्ञानवैराग्यसिद्ध्यर्थं गुरुपादोदकं पिबेत् ।

31. One should drink the feet-washed-water of the Guru for the uprooting of ignorance, to end the cycle of Karma, birth, death, etc., and for the attainment of dispassion and knowledge of the Self.

यस्य देवे परा भक्तिर्था देवे तथा गुरौ ।
तस्मैते कथिता ह्यर्थः प्रकाशन्ते महात्मनः ॥

19. He who is supremely devoted to the Lord and has the same equal devotion to his Guru, to him alone will the truths explained herein clearly reveal themselves.

Brief Life Sketch of Swami Chidananda Saraswati

Sridhar Rao, as Swami Chidananda was known before taking Sannyasa, was born to Srinivasa Rao and Sarojini on 24th September, 1916, the second of five children and the eldest son. Srinivasa Rao was a prosperous Zamindar owning several villages, extensive lands and palatial buildings in South India. Sarojini was an ideal Indian mother, noted for her saintliness.

At the age of eight his life was influenced by one Anantayya, a friend of his grandfather, who used to relate to him stories from the epics, Ramayana and Mahabharata. Doing Tapas, becoming a Rishi, and having a vision of the Lord became ideals which he cherished.

His uncle, Krishna Rao, shielded him against the evil influences of the materialistic world around him and sowed in him the seeds of the Nivritti life which he joyously nurtured until, as later events proved, it blossomed into sainthood.

His elementary education began at Mangalore. In 1932 he joined the Muthiah Chetty School in Madras where he distinguished himself as a brilliant student. His cheerful personality, exemplary conduct and extraordinary traits earned for him a distinct place in the hearts of all teachers and students with whom he came into contact.

In 1936, he was admitted to Loyola College, whose portals admit only the most brilliant among students. In 1938 he emerged with the degree of Bachelor of Arts. This period of studentship at a predominantly Christian College was significant. The glorious ideal of Lord Jesus, the Apostles and the other Christian saints had found in his heart a synthesis with all that is best and noble in the Hindu culture. To him study of the Bible was no mere routine; it was the living of

God; just as living and real as the words of the Vedas, the Upanishads, and the Bhagavad Gita. His innate breadth of vision enabled him to see Jesus in Krishna, not Jesus instead of Krishna. He was as much an adorer of Jesus Christ as he was of Lord Vishnu.

The family was noted for its high code of conduct and this was infused into his life. Charity and service were the glorious ingrained virtues of the members of the family. These virtues found an embodiment in Sridhar Rao. He discovered ways and means of manifesting them. None who sought his help was sent away without it. He gave freely to the needy.

Service to the lepers became his ideal. He would build them huts on the vast lawns of his home and look after them as though they were deities. Later, after he joined the Ashram, this early trait found complete and free expression where even the best among men would seldom venture into this great realm of divine love, based upon the supreme wisdom that All is one. Patients from the neighbourhood, suffering from the worst kinds of diseases came to him. To Chidanandaji the patient was none other than Lord Narayana Himself. He served Him with a tender love and compassion. The very movement of his hand portrayed him as worshipping the living Lord Narayana. Nothing would keep him from bringing comfort to the suffering inmates of the Ashram, no matter the urgency of other engagements at the time.

Service, especially of the sick, often brought out the fact that he had no idea of his own separate existence as an individual. It seemed as if his body clung loosely to a soul which he fully awakened to the realisation that It dwelt in all.

Nor was all this service confined to human beings. Birds and animals claimed his attention as much as, if not more than, human beings. He understood their language of suffering. His service of a sick dog evoked the admiration of

Gurudev. He would raise his finger in grim admonition when he saw anyone practising cruelty to dumb animals in his presence.

His deep and abiding interest in the welfare of lepers had earned for him the confidence and admiration of the Government authorities when he was elected to the Leper Welfare Association, constituted by the State-at first Vice-Chairman and later Chairman of the Muni-ki-Reti Notified Area Committee.

Quite early in life, he although born in a wealthy family, shunned the pleasures of the world to devote himself to seclusion and contemplation. In the matter of study it was the spiritual books which appealed to him more than college books. Even while he was at the College, lesson-books had to take second place to spiritual books. The works of Sri Ramakrishna, Swami Vivekananda and Gurudev took precedence over all others. He shared his knowledge with others so much so that he virtually became the Guru of the household and the neighbourhood to whom he would talk of honesty, love, purity, service and devotion to God. He would exhort them to perform Japa of Sri Rama. While still in his twenties he began initiating youngsters into this great Rama Taraka Mantra. He was an ardent admirer of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda. He visited the 'Math' at Madras regularly and participated in the service there. Swami Vivekananda's call for renunciation resounded within his pure heart. He ever thirsted for the Darshan of saints and Sadhus visiting the metropolis.

In June 1936, he disappeared from home and after a vigorous search by his parents, he was found in the secluded Ashram of a holy sage some miles from the sacred mountain shrine of Tirupati. He returned home after some persuasion. This temporary separation was but a preparation for the final

parting from the world of attachments to family, friends and possessions. While at home his heart dwelt in the silent forests of spiritual thoughts, beating in tune with the eternal Pranava-Nada of the Jnana Ganga within himself. The seven years at home following his return from Tirupati were marked by seclusion, service, intense study of spiritual literature, self-restraint, control of senses, simplicity in food and dress, abandonment of all comforts and practice of austerities which would augment his inner spiritual power.

The final decision came in 1943. He was already in correspondence with Sri Swami Sivananda of Rishikesh. He obtained Swamiji's permission to join the Ashram.

On arrival at the Ashram, he naturally took charge of the dispensary. He became the man with the healing hand. The growing reputation of his divine healing hand attracted a rush of patients to the Sivananda Charitable Dispensary.

Very soon after joining the Ashram, he gave ample evidence of the brightness of his intellect. He delivered lectures, wrote articles for the magazines and gave spiritual instructions to the visitors. When the Yoga-Vedanta Forest University (now known as the Yoga-Vedanta Forest Academy) was established in 1948, Gurudev paid him a fitting tribute by appointing him Vice-Chancellor and Professor of Raja Yoga. During the first year he inspired the students with his brilliant exposition of Maharshi Patanjali's Yoga Sutras.

It was also in the first year of his stay at the Ashram that he wrote his magnum opus—"Light-Fountain", an immortal biography of Sivananda of which Gurudev once remarked: "Sivananda will pass away, but 'Light-Fountain' will live."

In spite of his multifarious activities and intense Sadhana, he founded under the guidance of Gurudev, the Yoga Museum in 1947, in which the entire philosophy of Vedanta and all the processes of Yoga Sadhana are depicted

in the form of pictures and illustrations.

Towards the end of 1948, Gurudev nominated him as General Secretary of the Divine Life Society. The great responsibility of the organisation of the Society then fell on his shoulders. From that moment he spiritualised all its activities by his presence, counsel and wise leadership. He exhorted all to raise their consciousness to the level of the Divine.

On Guru Purnima day, 10th July 1949, he was initiated into the holy order of Sannyasa by His Holiness Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj, as Swami Chidananda, a name which connotes, "One who is in the highest consciousness and bliss."

Apart from his distinction as an able organiser of Divine Life Society Branches in several parts of India, his contribution to the success of the epochal All-India Tour of Gurudev in 1950 is memorable. Together they attracted to the Divine Life movement great political and social leaders in India, high-ranking Government officials and rulers of Indian States.

In November 1959 Swami Chidananda embarked on an extensive tour of America, being sent by Gurudev as his personal representative to radiate the message of Divine Life in the New World. He was hailed by the Americans as the Yogi of India very well fitted to interpret Indian Yoga to the occidental mind. He also toured several countries in South America and preached in Montevideo and Buenos Aires etc. From America he made a quick tour of Europe, returning to the Ashram in March 1962.

In April 1962 he set out on a pilgrimage to South India where he visited temples and other holy places and delivered soul-stirring lectures. He returned from the South in early July 1963, about ten days before the Mahasamadhi of Sri Gurudev, a fact which he described as nothing short of a miracle.

In August 1963 he was elected as President of the Divine Life Society. After the election, he strove hard to hold aloft the banner of Tyaga (renunciation), Seva (dedicated service), Prem (love of humanity) and Adhyatmikata (Spiritual idealism) not only within the set-up of the widespread Organisation of the Society, but in the hearts of countless seekers throughout the world, who were all too eager to seek his advice, help and guidance. He has endeared himself to one and all by his exemplary life of a towering Sannyasin, a spiritual magnet and working hard in all directions, for a resuscitation of the glorious Ideals of Divine Life in the world. His carefully guarded personality of an intrinsically good and loving nature of spontaneous servicefulness had brought immense solace in the lives of hundreds and thousands. In addition to his regular tours in this country far and near, the Swamiji toured Malaysia and Hong Kong and scattered broadcast the seeds of true culture, spirituality and the spirit of self-effacement in all actions, thus planting the art of divine living in the minds of thousands of people, which has evoked a deep sense of gratefulness to him in all quarters.

Views of Most Worshipful Sadguruudev Shri Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj

SWAMI CHIDANANDA IS ALL THIS AND MUCH MORE

"Chidanandaji was a great Yogi and Saint in his previous birth itself. This is his last birth. Chidananda is a Jeevanmukta, a great Saint, an ideal Yogi, a Para-Bhakta and a great Sage. Swami Chidananda is all this and much more. Chidanandaji's lectures are the outpourings of his saintly heart, the revelations of intuitive wisdom. His lectures must be printed in gold."

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HE BRINGS UPANISHADS FROM HIS HEART

"When you closely follow Swami Chidananda's lectures, you will find that all the Upanishadic wisdom is brought out in them, though he has not studied the Upanishads and does not even want to study them. He brings Upanishads from his heart. He is an embodiment of the Brahma Sutras and the Gita. I have found out of late that whenever he talks on Bhakti, and Nishkamya Karma, he always ends in Vedanta. That shows that if you are earnest in Sadhana and deeply devoted to God, Vedanta or knowledge of the Brahma Sutras will come by itself."

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"Celebration of Swami Chidananda's Birthday is in essence, worship of God."

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"All of you should treat Swami Chidanandaji as your Guru. Even I rever him as my Guru. I have learnt countless lessons from him. I love him. I adore him. His knowledge is vast. His wisdom is inspired and intuitive. His good nature is unrivalled. His heart is very large and his kindness is unequaled. All of you should learn from him, then only will you improve, develop and evolve."

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Views of Most Worshipful
Shri Swami Krishnanandaji Maharaj
ABOUT THE LECTURES OF
SRI SWAMI CHIDANANDAJI MAHARAJ

"His speeches always came direct from his heart, without the artificial embellishments of the usual professional, but carrying the force and vehemence of a personality which lived what it taught."

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"His talks, discourses and lectures were a welcome treat to everyone who listened to them, because his sermons came not from a premeditated intellectual region but from the realm of a spontaneous outpouring of his heart, his feeling, his love and affection and his kind and generous outlook and attitude towards all things. The speeches which Swamiji delivered were not the neatly got-up make-shift productions of the academies but the forceful torrents of the fountain of a life-giving vitality and sustaining power which was the immediate need of the grief-torn minds of people in the world, who received his message with a longing comparable only to the hopeful looks of an anxious child towards its affectionate mother."

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"Swamiji's lectures are simple, lucid, inspiring, absolutely practical and universal in nature."

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"His talks do more intimately appeal directly to the hearts of aspirants."

Excerpt from the talk delivered by Most Worshipful Shri Swami Venkatesanandaji Maharaj during celebration of the 39th birthday of Sri Swami Chidanandaji Maharaj at Sivananda Ashram, Rishikesh

"Blessed is the land that has given birth to a mahapurusha like you. Blessed are the people who are

fortunate enough to enjoy your satsang even for a brief time. Blessed is the age in which you have chosen to incarnate upon this earth.

We are supremely happy that God has granted us this human birth, especially in this (generally dreaded) Kali Yuga; for only thus could we have lived at your holy feet and those of Sri Gurudev.

We consider ourselves blessed that Gurudev's magical words and spiritual magnetic force have attracted us to his feet and have kindled the spark of aspiration in our heart; and that your constant, loving admonitions have kept that spark alive, and fanned it into a flame. We are your spiritual children; for we see no difference between you and Sri Gurudev in any respect (even the names are very close to each other, literally). And, we gladly resign ourselves utterly to your divine care."

Views of Most Worshipful
Shri Sitaram Omkarnath Babaji Maharaj

"If you take all the saints of the past and all the saints of the present and all the saints of the future, the essence of all these saints is Swami Chidananda!"

Referring to Shri Swami Chidanandaji Maharaj, Most Worshipful Shri Swami Ranganathanandaji Maharaj said during a monk's conference at Sivananda Ashram, Rishikesh held under his presidentship that :-

"We are all monks here but amongst us there is a saint!"



WHAT IS IN THE HEART OF THE GREAT GURUS

What is in the heart of the great Gurus? Why do they act, and engage themselves in ceaseless work, when they have no motivation for acting, having fulfilled all that has to be fulfilled? They have done everything that has to be done, attained everything that has to be attained.

If at all one could attribute to them any desire — if you want an explanation from your point of view — then you can say that they have but one thought, one desire, a spontaneous intention of supreme love and goodwill that all may be established in the same great state that they have attained by the grace of the Supreme.

- Swami Chidananda

THE GOAL OF LIFE

O Man ! The Goal of life is God-realisation. God-Realisation grants Supreme Joy, Peace and Fearlessness. Most precious is human birth. Utilise this birth to attain God. Life is short. Time is fleeting. Waste not time. Engage in noble deeds. Be up and doing upon the path of Divine Life.

Serve, Love, Give, Purify, Meditate, Realise. Be good; do good. Be kind; be compassionate. Practice non-injury, truth and purity. This is the foundation of Yoga and Vedanta. Adapt, adjust, accommodate. Bear insult; bear injury. Serve all. Love all. Embrace all in the Oneness of the Spirit. This is Divine Life.

Enquire 'who am I?' Know thy Self and be free. Thou art not this body, not this mind. Thou art Immortal Self. Thou art unborn, eternal, changeless, indestructible, ever-pure, all-perfect Spirit or Atman. Realise this and be free. This is your foremost duty. Do this through selflessness and service, devotion and worship, purification, concentration and meditation. Attain God-realisation. Do it now. Abide in Bliss, Peace and Perfection for ever.

- Swami Sivananda

CHAPTER - 1

VEDIC CULTURE

VEDIC CULTURE

When Swami Vivekananda returned to India after attending the Parliament of Religions a journalist asked him: "Swamiji, you have seen the Occident, travelled for two years in different countries of the Western world, and seen their scientific progress, their technological advancement and all the wonderful progress that they have made. Now after this experience, after all that you have seen, what is your opinion of India? What do you think about our country?" Drawing himself up to his full height and looking straight into the eyes of the reporter, his voice trembling with emotion, it is said, Vivekananda said: "My friend, when I left the shores of India for the West, I loved my country, I loved India. But after my visit, after having seen the society and life there, now I know that the very soil of this country is fit to be worshipped. My mother country is a country to be adored, worshipped." Ponder on this incident which the writer reported in his biography of Swamiji. What was it that made Swami Vivekananda who was a rationalist, not an emotionalist, to make this statement? He had patriotism in abundance but predominantly and primarily he was a man with a giant intellect and very great critical faculty. There was a time when he questioned everything about his religion. There was a period in his youth when he even turned agnostic, became sceptical of the ancient truths and even doubted the very authenticity of visions and experiences of the Saint of Dakshineshwar whom later on he accepted as his Worshipful Master and Guru. He was a person with a forthright nature. If he felt something, he never concealed it. So, we have to pause and ponder, what was it that made him

express himself so fervently and so strongly. That was his experience of the difference in the quality of the vision, the view of life and the way of life he saw of the people practising in the occidental society and the basic idealism that filled the life of a citizen of Bharatavarsha. He saw how by our very culture, the entire set up of our life was divinely oriented, our very approach to life was that it was not an end in itself but the means for the attainment of certain higher ends and these higher ends were idealistic.

Gurudev Swami Sivananda used to say that India is the only country in the world where God-realisation is the goal of human life. No other human society lives life in this way. Our primary purpose in life is to attain transcendental divine experience, to know the Unknown, to know That which is beyond the reach of the senses, mind and intellect. That is the supreme goal. Goals there are many, but the highest goal and purpose of human existence is the realisation of the Absolute. This human life is considered so precious because it throws open the door for that attainment and spiritual idealism in our life. It is in this connection that our ancient sages left for us, for generations to come, certain principles to live by, certain ideals to pursue and emulate and in this connection this evening as my joyful sharing and serving with you in the name of beloved and worshipful Holy Master Guru Maharaj Sri Swami Sivanandaji, I exercise this privilege given to me at this spiritual gathering, this fellowship here this evening, to put before you certain important aspects of our culture.

First and foremost they gave for our adoption in our life four values to strive after and as it is in the peculiar tradition of Sanskrit language they termed them as Purushartha. Purushartha means exertion. Purushartha is right exertion and the values for which you must exert they

indicated by the same term, exertion, instead of using some other term implying the goal of such exertion. They have given us the concept of Purusharthic Chatushtaya, which has come down to us from ancient times. We all know that when we take birth in this world we have a situation where we find ourselves in link with two universes. One is the invisible inner universe of the Spirit from which you have come into a material physical universe, assuming a gross material physical body to function in this universe. But prior to your advent into your gross physical material universe, you did not have this material body, you were not part of this phenomenal material universe. You were in a different state, in a different dimension, subtle, invisible, unmanifest, and naturally, therefore, you are related to it. Your present state of being conditioned by a name and a form, this body-bound state, is only for a little while, some years only. There is no definite guarantee of its duration. It varies from individual to individual and any moment there can be an abrupt conclusion of this present state and therefore, soon after this episode once again you will find yourself in that same unmanifest dimension. Therefore, our relationship to the invisible inner universe of the Spirit seems to be of a greater importance, more essential and vital than this temporary relationship with this outer material universe. This comes and goes. This has a beginning and an end. Yet, as long as we are in this embodied condition, we are related to this universe and to everything in it. It is a constant continuous involvement with this outer universe. That is within our knowledge. We are aware of 'This' than of 'That'.

Our ancients brought home the fact that you are only a passing pilgrim here. Your permanent abode is not This but That—whence you have come and whither you are bound and therefore, for the inner life also there are these twin-relationships. The relationship with this outer universe,

whether you wish it or not, is there. It is inevitable. You have to face it and do whatever it demands. This is divided into two of the values. One is you have to attend to the stern necessities of our physical life-hunger, thirst, heat, cold and other inclemencies of the weather. So you have to have, as they say, food, clothing, shelter—*Roti, Kapada, Makan*—and for this you have to exert in order to earn and provide yourself with the necessities. In this economy-oriented life on earth, money is necessary. You have to exert and earn money, whatever the ways and means may be. So exertion to earn money is allowed. This is conceded as an inevitable value and is called Artha.

At the same time, unlike other creatures, man is not satisfied merely by fulfilling the needs of his physical nature. You provide the beasts with food, water and a place they can sleep in and all their life they will be contented to live in that condition. Man has a psychological dimension to his nature wherein he has desires, ambitions, plans and schemes. He has a vital personality within which he is a thinking, feeling and reasoning being. Therefore, the sages conceded this other dimension as of secondary value. We have desires, because they are part of the psychological nature which longs for many things, and has many desires in various directions. The ancients said that you must exert to fulfil them also but then, they said, that your ultimate goal is to once again go back to the very source of your being from whence you came. They experienced this during the greatest heights of their transcendental experience that all life streams forth from one cosmic source of eternal existence. That is the source, that is the root, that is the fountain-head, the origin of all that Is and what all that Is, is something beyond our comprehension. Those who realised its magnitude, its infinity, were aghast. They said: "*Ananta-koti Brahmanda Nayaka*—That Being is

the Supreme Lord of infinite crores of universes." This universe is a grain of sand. Our planet earth, our solar system, our lunar system, our stellar system, the galaxies, all that man knows as space and the celestial objects that fill our space, is but a grain of sand. There are infinite crores of such universes in this incomprehensible magnitude of the infinitude of that Reality, and therefore, the source of all that exists, that is your original abode, that is your home. From That all beings have come into being and in that only all beings exist. It is the invisible support of your very existence. If it did not exist, you could not exist. It is That which supports you and unto That all beings are moving, unto That all beings are going forth and this transcendental experience is what the sages perceived. They said: You all have come from That, you exist in That and towards That you are moving. That is your be-all and end-all.

This process of coming into this earth existence is a journey back home to your eternal abode. So make your life a conscious effort of this glorious journey back into the Divine. In that experience, in that attainment, you will be liberated from all limitations and imperfections that are inevitable to this conditioned, finite, earth-life. Because of its very nature this world is imperfect and is bounded by life and death and in between these two inevitable terminals of an entry into this existence and exit, life is chaotic. Life does not give real contentment because it is finite, it is conditioned and is subject to change. Therefore, this imperfect life cannot give Santosha (contentment), Tripti (eternal satisfaction) and Ananda (bliss). You can be liberated from these imperfect experiences once and for all and get eternal satisfaction. These vexing, binding limitations, these shackles will not be needed anymore once you attain that experience. Therefore, they call it liberation; liberation from all that the earth-life means to you now, body-

bound condition of imprisonment. This is the goal which is to be attained. Life is a means to its attainment. Why not make a conscious process because evolution is the law of life, evolution through divine perfection. That supreme goal, Moksha-prapti (attainment of liberation), therefore, is ever to be kept in view and you must move towards it.

Earning money and satisfying or fulfilling your desires is a mundane aspect of your psychological nature. If this process takes on a contrary quality or a contrary characteristic so that the very process of attending to these two aspects of your life pull you into an opposite direction, then life itself will become a great obstacle to the attainment of perfection which is your divine destiny. It will slow down your progress towards that great goal. You must, therefore, take care that your life here, if it cannot become actually a supplement and a compliment, a supportive process, at least let it not stand as an obstacle to the attainment of your divine destiny. Let it not become an obstacle, let it not become a hampering factor.

How is one to achieve this? The sages said that the only way of achievement is by bringing into every detail your life, into these two mundane aspects—earning of wealth and the fulfillment of human desires—bringing into this process a quality which harmonises with the Divinity. God is Truth, let your life be pervaded by Truth. God is Love, let your life be pervaded by Love. God is Compassion and Grace, let your life be pervaded by Compassion. God is Purity, let your life and actions be pervaded by Purity. Thus bring into your life Truth, Purity, Compassion, Love and Goodness, everything that is auspicious, everything that is blessed, everything that is in harmony with divine goal which you are trying to attain by this pattern of living. Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness for theirs shall be the Kingdom of God.

Righteousness (Dharma) is your culture, Bharatiya Sanskriti, your great heritage. Therefore conceive of Dharma as the greatest friend of the Jivatma when he is in this human world, as a human being. There is no greater wealth than Dharma. Dharma is your greatest friend. Why? It is that which will guarantee and assure that your secular life will not stand in the way of the attainment of liberation. That will assure that the quality of your outer life, the secular life, will be such that it will become part of your steady onward progress, part of your Sadhana for Moksha, part of your Sadhana for Bhagavatsakshatkara (God-realisation). This is life of Dharma, Compassion, Kindness, Purity, Truth, Love, Wisdom and Forgiveness. This is all that we expect from God. Allah is all merciful and ever forgiving. What is God? He is the sum totality of man's concept of forgiveness, of love, of compassion and therefore what you expect from God towards your own imperfect individual being, that you project to fellow beings and all the creatures. That is why the sages gave us this value as the basic or the fundamental value of mundane life. They said: Base your entire life upon Dharma and do as you wish. Ply a trade, do a business, be a farmer, be a doctor, it will not come in your way, provided you do not desert Dharma.

Adhere to Dharma. If all that you do in this secular world to make a living are in accordance with Dharma, then you have nothing to fear. *Svalpamapyasya dharmasya trayaate mahato bhayat*—Even a little bit of Dharma will save you from great fear. This earth-life will not become an obstacle, it will not become a bondage. On the contrary it will become a support, a supplement to your inner aspirations, your inner ascent towards this coveted goal of Moksha-prapti or liberation. *Dharma rakshati rakshitah*—Dharma protects him who protects it.

Be helpful to your brothers and sisters. Desire to serve

your own neighbour. Desire to serve the society, nation, all creatures, even plants and insects. Desire to be serviceable to all. With this vision the sages gave us the great Sutra that the very body has been given to us in order to benefit others—*Paropakarartham idam sariram*. What a grand view about the body and what a great contrast is this view to that which prevails normally in the unenlightened and uncultured societies! They think that the body is an instrument for enjoyment.

Our culture raised the great warning: O man, beware. Senses are your enemies. They were not given to be avenues of enjoyment. They were given as windows of perception, to see the world into which God has sent you, so that by seeing the world you gain knowledge about it. We have perverted all these senses, these faculties which God endowed us with, and converted them merely into avenues of biological pleasurable sensations and animal excitement.

There is also a note of warning. They said: O man, beware. Species perish even due to being endowed by just one sense; the fish gets impelled upon the fisherman's hook through its tongue. Because of the sense of touch an elephant is caught and has to work like a slave for a whole life time. Because of the sense of vision insects are attracted towards fire and are burnt to death. Because of the sense of hearing the deer is ensnared by the hunter. Because of the sense of smell the bee is caught up in the flower. Just one sense of these various creatures takes them to their doom. What to say of man who is endowed with all these five senses? Therefore, be aware of the fact that if these senses are not properly kept at their place and made to function as they ought to function, they can become your destroyers. They can take you to your downfall. Therefore, O man! be aware of this fact and exercise restraint and let your actions be Dharmic, let your actions not go contrary to Dharma because of this urge

towards sense indulgence. These senses were not given for indulgence. Knowing this, if you determine to walk the path of Dharma, then your outer life in this universe will not stand in the way of your attaining the supreme state of liberation.

Of these four-fold values, Dharma is the basic fundamental value. Live your life according to Dharma and base all your activities upon it. All desires that come in the course of your fulfilling your duties, provided they are not contrary to Dharma, are legitimate desires. Fulfill these desires. But if a desire becomes a lower desire and degenerates into mere sense indulgence a man may lose his humanness and act as an animal, a devil.

The body was given for doing good to others. What a sublime concept of the human body which is a temple of God! God is in our heart. This is not true only about yourself but also about all beings. All beings are visible and moving temples of a living God. Therefore, have the desire to serve God through all living creatures. *Paropakarartham idam sariram* (This body is for the benefit of others) is the great sublime concept that our sages gave us. Therefore let your life be filled with this ideal of doing good to others. Do not take this body merely as an avenue for sense satisfaction, gross sense gratification and sense indulgence. Be a man; assert and affirm the dignity of your status as a human being. You are not merely a beast, you are a rational faculty. Think and be a self-possessed being, a self-possessed creature. Manage yourself. Lead a dignified life of moderation and self-control. Moderation is the key-note of the Gita, too. All of Yoga ultimately means a discipline to control the mind and conquer the senses.

Buddha once put a question, "Who is the greater conqueror? One who takes vast armies behind him and invades territories and subdues another kingdom and conquers it, or one who conquers one's own senses, mind

and desires?" and answered it himself: "I declare to you, O Bhikkus, he is a greater conqueror who has subdued himself, who has conquered his passions, who has controlled his senses." This is our ideal. From the beginning of life, right from the student days, be a Samyami, be a self-controlled one, have self-mastery. Of the first four values which the human individual must strive after—Dharma, Artha, Kama and Moksha—Artha and Kama relate to this mundane world, earning your livelihood and fulfilling your desires. Moksha is the supreme spiritual value which is the true goal of life. But if it is to be attained in and through our normal life, it is possible only if our normal life is characterised and pervaded by the ideal of Dharma, that is, the ideal of truth, purity, kindness, compassion and self-restraint. Thus, Dharma became the fundamental as well as the foundational value. This is the first force which your great tradition, your great culture has given to you as your heritage.

Of the four-fold values to strive for, the highest is the spiritual value. The inevitable values are the economical as well as the vital values such as fulfilment of desire and earning of money, but they are not to turn you away from the highest value. The governing factor in all your secular life should be Dharma. While adhering to Dharma, if you lead your secular life, then Paramartha can be attained through Prapancha. Therefore, Dharma is the most important value. Dharma, Artha, Kama and Moksha were given, therefore, as the four-fold Purusharthas for attainment of the supreme purpose of human existence—divine experience and liberation through divine perfection. To achieve this in a spontaneous and a natural manner there are another set of four values. The sages said that at the very beginning of your life cultivate all things that are necessary to become established in Dharma.

The human life is divided into four stages. The first

quarter is the Vidyarthi Jivana (student life). The second is the householders' family life, Grihasthashrama. The third is the retired man's life, Vanaprasthashrama and the fourth, the life of total dedication to Brahma Jnana—Sannyasashrama. Just as Dharma is the foundational value, the first Asrama is the foundation stage. If in this very Ashrama you equip yourself with all that is necessary in order to live the three-quarters of your life in an ideal manner then you have nothing to fear. Therefore, as a student, acquire all that is necessary to lead an ideal life. This part of life is conceived of as being lived in an atmosphere most conducive to attaining self-control, character, virtue, right thinking and right aspirations. Go away from the foul atmosphere where there are temptations, attractions that excite the mind and make it Chanchal (oscillating). Go into a serene atmosphere and live with a person who is himself leading that ideal life, a Rishi, a Jnani or a Guru. Go to him and under his guidance lead a life of self-control. Get up early in the morning, take a cold bath, do Asanas and exercises that help to control your senses and then lead a life of self-control, moderation, moral character and conduct. Sit at your Guru's feet and learn. He will teach you all that is necessary to lead your life the ideal way. He will also give you the secular knowledge of art, craft or profession. Many Vidyas have been enumerated by our scriptures. He will teach you to ply a profession but at the same time he will also tell you what is the way of leading a righteous life. He will expound to you the secret of Dharma and then, at the same time, give you the knowledge of the supreme goal. He will teach you Vedanta. He will give you the rudiments of spiritual knowledge.

The ancient mode of education was an integrated course of instruction, where the young man, as he began to grow, got the basic knowledge of Dharma, spiritual knowledge

and secular behaviour. While he was acquiring this three-fold knowledge, he was also training himself in self-control and moderation, conquest of mind, restraint of senses, desires—Samyama, Sama, Dama, etc. The first 25 years of human life should be dedicated to acquire good health, perfect character, self-control and all that is necessary to know in order to live life righteously, to be financially independent via some trade or profession and at the same time be aware of the goal that one is ultimately going to attain.

Equipped with this knowledge, the Brahmachari—the student—entered into the second stage of life after he had already put a firm and ideal foundation. He was not in danger of becoming a slave of his senses; he was a self-restrained youth with character and self-control. Thus he entered into the Grihasthashrama (householder's life), took for himself a partner in life and was explained why he should enter into the Grihasthashrama: because the family lineage has to be kept continued for the sake of progeny. He took for himself a partner, for the sake of fulfilling Dharma, for the sake of practising Sadhana, devotion and worship. When he entered into the second stage of life, that is, the Grihasthashrama, he knew that he was not merely entering into a physical partnership with another physical creature, he was not entering into a social partnership with another family; he was entering into a spiritual partnership with a soul like him that had come into this world of embodied being, in order to fulfil its divine destiny, each one working out one's own Karma Bhoga. So the relationship between a husband and a wife in the second Ashrama was not merely an earthly partnership, not merely physical, or even social, but essentially a spiritual partnership between two souls who were both on the upper path of spiritual evolution, ultimately culminating in divine perfection. This is how the view of life wherein 'Dampatya Sambandha is sacred'

was brought home to us. The wife was called Sahadharmini. While living a life of Dharma, she was to be your companion. If you see the ancient concept of the wife, she was to man, everything—companion, friend, consoler, helper and partner in this great spiritual adventure of coming face to face with the great Reality. Such was the ideal and total concept of this relationship. Therefore, home became for them not only for the living of a normal worldly existence where the wife was the mother of his children, a hostess to receive his guests and a housewife looking after all these duties of the household, she also became a Sahadharmini and a partner in devotion and Upasana.

So the first duty of the householder was Isvara Upasana, Aradhana, and this they enabled by bringing about this wonderful tradition that prevails in our country of a Kula-Devata (worship of a family deity). For generations each family has a certain family deity and the home is a place of worship of this deity, and the worship of this deity was the first thing that the husband and wife did as soon as they got up in the morning.

The second important Dharma of the Grihasthashrama was Paropakara—to give charity, to help those in need—and Atithi Satkara (honouring of the guests). Atithi is not an invited guest, mind you. He is a chance visitor who happens to be at your door at the time of your food. Atithya was one of the great Dharmas of the householder and his wife.

The third aspect of Grihastha Dharma was to evolve between themselves reciprocally a certain ideal behaviour of mutual love, honouring each other's individual freedom. This ideal relationship brought about in the house an atmosphere of harmony and cordiality. This third important duty also became a pattern of conduct for the children when they came into their family. The family, thus, became an ideal ground for

nurturing a new generation. They find that between their parents exists a beautiful relationship of harmony, love, mutual respect and tolerance, which creates an ideal atmosphere for their growth. Through their personal relationship the parents place before the children an exemplary way of conducting themselves which becomes the first educational process of the children.

What moulds the character of the growing infant is the example placed by the mother and father to which they are exposed all the time. These examples become the atmosphere of the home, depending entirely upon the way in which the husband and wife behave with each other. This becomes the first educative process of the child. Home is, therefore, the nursery of the nation, nursery of the world. Providing an ideal setting and an ideal atmosphere for the generation of tomorrow becomes the third important duty of the married couple. Isvaropasana is the first duty, Paropakara and Samaja Seva is the second duty and providing an ideal environment for the coming generation through their own personal example is the third duty.

Now, we move on to the third Ashrama. Having fulfilled the duties of rearing children, making them adults capable of standing on their own feet, Grihasthashrama is not to continue till the end of one's life. Up-till now you were entirely preoccupied with your family and your profession, providing for your parents, wife, children and other dependents. To a certain extent, it was a self-centred life, though within the scope of that self-centredness, the Grihastha, that is, the mother and father practised selflessness for the sake of the children. They sacrificed their personal comforts and conveniences for their children, their family and their parents. There was, within this apparently self-centred living, an exercise of unselfishness of a certain kind. When that phase

is over one must give way to the new generation. There is a significant saying: When the son attains the age of 16, the father must treat him as a friend. The psychological advice given to the father is to gradually give the children responsibility, let them be self-reliant.

The husband and wife now move into a third dimension of social living where they retire. Having retired, they have little more leisure on their hands and at the same time the 25 to 30 years of professional living has given them vast experience and expertise in their line of work that now has to be placed at the disposal of the society. This third stage of life is the most valuable asset to the Indian society because during this period the Grihasthas become altruists and philanthropists. They are now the real selfless servants of the society. These middle-aged people still have good health, they have more time, they have experience and expertise which they must selflessly place at the disposal of the young generation as well as the society. They have earned, they have saved by careful living, so they are now servants of the society. This stage of life ought to be the most important stage. While keeping their knowledge and experience at the disposal of the society, they should, at the same time, give more emphasis to their inner life, go on a pilgrimage, go to Ashrams, do Satsang, read the scriptures and become more contemplative. Both husband and wife should, together, enter more into the inner life, study, meditation, prayer, Satsang, pilgrimage and at the same time place themselves at the disposal of the society. We must realise that a time comes when we have to say 'good-bye'. We have to prepare for that last journey. We arrive at, to humorously put it, at the railway platform of our life when the train will come and we must cheerfully say good-bye.

At this time the sages conceived of the fourth Ashrama

where the only duty is to gather together his mind and place it upon Brahman, on the Supreme Being. That is the fourth-quarter of life, the sun-set period of one's life when all your relationships and connections are now coming to a close, to an end. Till that time your entire Lakshya, your entire mind, should be fixed upon the Eternal, no more on the passing world. You have fulfilled all your duties and now you have to depart. The river is reaching the ocean and a time will come when it has to merge into the ocean.

Thus was conceived the four-fold Ashrama Dharma—Brahmacharya Ashrama (student life), Grihasthashrama (professional life), Vanaprasthashrama (selfless service and turning into the spiritual aspect) and ultimately the Sannyasashrama (total dedication to Brahman).

Now, you may say that times have changed, and that I am talking about some very old, ancient times. Yes, times have changed and we cannot duplicate these things as they were once upon a time. But my plea is that there is a great need to keep the spirit of this Ashrama Dharma alive. Keep the spirit intact, live this ideal but bring about a little adjustment and modification in the time period. So far as the Brahmacharya Ashrama is concerned, by and large it has not changed. If you want to become a technically qualified person, an engineer or a doctor, by the time you finish your studies, you are 25 years old, anyhow. But in the other Ashramas you may bring about a necessary modification. But do not discard the Ashrama Dharma as something that has no relevance to our time. It has as much relevance and as much significance today as it was then because it is connected with human life. The spirit of these four Ashramas must be kept intact.

The third set of 'fours' which have been given to us to follow are the four spiritual qualifications that we must acquire in order to enter into a pursuit of that Supreme existence and

realisation. It is called the Sadhana Chatushtaya—1. Viveka (discrimination), 2. Vairagya (dispassion), 3. Shat-sampat (the six-fold virtues), viz., Sama (tranquillity), Dama (restraint), Uparati (satiety or renunciation), Titiksha (endurance), Sraddha (faith) and Samadhana (concentration), and 4. Mumukshutva (strong yearning for liberation).

What is it that makes us superior to animals? The ability to think and reason. We exercise intelligence for our own earthly living. We try to be clever and succeed in our normal life; but that is not enough. Intelligence has been given for higher things also. Therefore exercise Viveka—'what is conducive to my highest welfare'. There is a great necessity to exercise Viveka. Dharma-adharma Viveka (discrimination between righteousness and unrighteousness), Nitya-anitya Viveka (discrimination between permanent and temporary), Sad-asad Viveka (discrimination between truth and untruth), Atma-anatma Viveka (discrimination between the Self and the non-Self) should be exercised.

The second qualification that you must develop is a disgust of, and a turning away from, all that is ignoble, gross and unworthy by developing a great love for that which is worthy and noble. This is called dispassion or Vairagya. Raga means attachment and Asakti. To have attachment towards things that are unworthy and ignoble, gross and low, is not becoming of our human status. Centre your attachment upon God, centre it upon noble idealism, upon worthy pursuits. Have dispassion for all that is petty, unworthy and ignoble.

After Viveka and Vairagya, the third of this set of four is a peculiar combination, a set of six virtues. The six equipments are taken as one because they are calculated to bring about mental control and discipline. Concentration and meditation can never be possible without mental control and mental discipline. First virtue is equanimity of mind. If you are

filled with too much of cravings and desires, every moment your mind is in a state of agitation and excitement as you live among attractive things of this illusory world. Knowing that your goal is elsewhere—I must live not only to fulfil these petty desires but also for the attainment of some higher ideal, higher goal—you reduce your desires, keep them under check; then the mind attains a certain state of equanimity. It does not become prey to excitement and agitation. Serenity is the topmost virtue in the group of Shat-sampat.

Then restraint of the senses (Dama). The mind will come under control very easily if Dama also is practised. By the practice of Dama you do not allow either the senses or the mind to come in contact with the objects. In the practice of Sama and Dama the five Jnana-Indriyas (organs of knowledge), viz., ears, skin, eyes, tongue (taste) and nose (smell) are controlled, besides the five Karma-Indriyas (organs of action), viz., speech, hands, feet, genitals and anus. The Indriyas should not be allowed to run riot into sensual grooves. They should not be allowed to throw us ruthlessly into the deep pit of worldliness just as the turbulent horse carries away the rider wherever it likes.

Now we come to the practice of Uparati. Uparati is self-withdrawal. Uparati is extreme abstinence. The mind of the student who is established in Uparati will never be agitated even a bit when he comes in contact with external objects. This state of mind automatically comes when one has practised Viveka, Vairagya, Sama and Dama. When one perceives the worthlessness of all lower things and is convinced in the true worth of a higher thing then one turns away from the former and gets absorbed in the later. This state of mind is verily Uparati.

Titiksha is the power of endurance. A Titikshu is able to bear pain, insult, heat and cold. He does not lament on this

score. He is free from anxiety. "He who has the power of endurance, who is balanced in pleasure and pain, steadfast, is fit for immortality" (Gita II-15). Adjust yourself to the temperaments and mentalities of others with whom you mix. This is the secret of happiness. Do not be afraid of insult, disrespect, dishonour, abuse or harsh words. This is real Titiksha.

Sraddha is unshakable faith in the existence of Brahman, in the teachings of the Guru and the scriptures. It also means faith in oneself. This is not blind faith. It is based on accurate reasoning, evidence and experience. Men with no assets but tremendous faith in themselves have accomplished wonders. Know that everything is lost when faith is lost. Faith is power. Faith is strength. Faith is abundant energy. Faith is the soul of religion. It creates new hopes and awakens immortality.

The last of the six-fold virtues is Samadhana. It is mental balance. It is equipoise and calm. There is perfect concentration now. This is the fruit of the practices of Sama, Dama, Uparati, Titiksha and Sraddha. It is self-settledness.

Lastly we come to the fourth of the main qualifications, Mumukshutva or burning desire for liberation. If one is equipped with Viveka, Vairagya and Shat-sampat, Mumukshutva will come by itself. The mind moves towards the Source of its own accord, because it has lost its hold now on external objects.

This brief message is of interest to all of us because it holds the key to our happiness and it is based upon experience. In different individuals experiences can differ of the same thing, same situation, same perception, same event, but the ultimate experience of anyone and everyone of any time or any clime is uniform. It tallies. It does not differ either from person to person or place to place or time to time

because the cosmic experience, the ultimate experience, is identical for all, the simple reason being that the Reality is one. It is indivisible, it is non-dual. Therefore the ultimate experience of all illumined seers, sages has always been one and this Truth about which I am going to tell you is based upon this ultimate experience which is Absolute. It does not depend upon any other factor and it is invariable. It is based upon the experience of not one but many, through millennium down centuries and generations so that it has been authenticated and proven again and again. It is another important point which you cannot afford to ignore, that this ultimate experience is an experience of pure, unalloyed, perfect and supreme happiness and peace.

Now I might have said it is pure unalloyed happiness, or I might have said it is pure and perfect peace, peace that passeth understanding. Why should I have said, instead, happiness and peace? I have said so because these two, i.e., peace and happiness, are inseparable. Peace is invariably accompanied by unutterable happiness and happiness is always absent where peace is absent. So where there is peace there is happiness. The great musician—saint Tyagaraja says in Telugu: *Santamu leka saukhyamu ledu*—without peace there is no happiness. Those who want happiness must try to learn the technique of attaining peace. Simultaneously they will also have to find out what are the causes of its opposites, restlessness, agitation, excitement. These three contribute to the absence of peace. Those who want to have a perfect and radiant state of health and experience the joy of living, strength, perfect digestion, good sleep, good appetite, also have to learn the causes of ill-health so that they can avoid it. This is a dual process of avoiding that which is negative and cultivating that which is positive.

This is a vast subject in itself but we can condense it

into a nutshell. If you want happiness, you must know how to generate peace from within and it is only when more and more individuals in society generate peace in their own heart, they are at peace with themselves, peace with people around them; such people alone will gradually spread the vibrations of peace, which may gradually widen in its area and bring about peace in wider fields and areas of human living. Ultimately, it can even lead to national and international peace. First and foremost the individual must be at peace with himself, otherwise the collection of restless individuals will bring about more restlessness.

If you go into a monastery where 40-50 monks dwell, all under vow of perpetual silence, each moving about serenely doing his own duty, performing prayer and his allotted work, what will your initial reaction be? The moment you go there you will become thrilled with a sense of peace. The monastery is a great contrast from the outside world, from the hectic world that you are coming from. Instantaneously you are at peace. Why? Because the whole atmosphere is saturated and permeated with the vibrations of peace, because it is a place where a set of people are living in absolute peace. There is no discord, no disharmony, no clash or conflict. All are at peace with themselves, all are at peace among themselves and the moment you go there you too partake of that peace which has been generated, which is vibrating in that atmosphere. On the other hand if you go into a factory or a Stock Exchange where there is a lot of tension, there is a certain restlessness. There is no peace. In a University Campus there is no peace because of confrontations and oppositions and conflicts and clashes.

What is the way to establish peace within oneself? What is the way to try to move in the world with peace? Meditate upon peace. Daily we must meditate upon the concept of

peace and a great desirability of peace, the countless advantages accruing from cultivating peace, living in peace, being at peace, how much good comes out of it, how much benefit results out of it, what a great deal of good accrues from peace. You must also meditate upon all the disadvantages of restlessness, excitement and agitation. You must contemplate on some ideal personality, the embodiment of peace, some serene being, who is a personification of absolute peace, like the great Buddha or Jesus of Nazareth, or any other great being who is full of peace, who had such abundance of peace that anyone who approached him immediately felt the great peace, like the great sage Ramana Maharshi of Ramanashram, Tiruvannamalai, Arunachala and our own Holy Master Swami Sivananda. He was peace within himself, peace with the whole world. He radiated peace. The moment you drew near to him, all your agitations vanished, all the turmoils simmering in your mind subsided and you felt peace, like a person coming in from the hot summer sun into an air-conditioned, cool, silent room of peace.

Meditate upon the peaceful figure and then meditate upon yourself as already having attained that state of absolute peace. Already visualise your self-image as being filled with peace, already having attained the state of absolute peace. So meditation on peace is one of the important keys to gradually developing peace within yourself, growing into a state of peace because what you constantly hold in your mind, that you gradually begin to experience. What you constantly think of, that you become. That is the great law of the inner realm, the realm of the mind, of thought, sentiment and emotion. This is one important key to peace.

Secondly, simplicity of life leads to peace. The more desires you develop the more restless is the mind. Desires are enemies of peace, specially miscellaneous unnecessary

desires. Certain basic desires no one can avoid. They are necessary for the very living of our life, for surviving and existing. Try to keep your desires minimal. The more you multiply the desires and wants, the more you create restlessness in your mind and where there is restlessness there is no peace, there is no happiness. Desire is the enemy of peace. If the desire is countered, it leads to anger, anger leads to attachment and hatred.

Forgiving and forgetting is another way to peace. Ignore insult and injury, don't take it upon yourselves, don't start brooding over them. Never hold a grudge in your mind. Don't constantly think of returning tit for tat, paying back in the same coin. You will lose your peace of mind. Let go, let go. The more your egoism, the greater the restlessness of your mind. The simpler your heart, the greater your peace. The more you want recognition, status, power, authority, the more you are restless. If you want to attain peace, simplify your life, reduce your wants and minimise your desires. Do not keep grudges, forgive and forget, do not seek recognition. You will have peace.

Thirdly, there is a great cosmic source of infinite immeasurable peace. To break away from it, to separate yourself from it, is to enter into a state of restlessness and agitation. If you inwardly try to connect yourself with it, with that great source, gradually peace will come into your own being. Link up with that supreme peace and blessedness which we call God. Call it God, call it anything. It is the ultimate Reality. It is perfect peace, it is absolute peace, it is unalloyed peace, boundless and limitless, infinite and unfathomable, immeasurable, eternal peace. Link yourself with that and then gradually peace will come unto you and simultaneously you will attain bliss.

Forget the past. Don't brood over it. Don't plan too

much for the future. Try to move through the present serenely, unaffectedly. Then you will experience the peace that is ever present; not for one split second it is absent. Peace is always there. We superimpose upon it our own restlessness. There is no lack of peace in this universe. Peace floods this universe in abundance, everywhere, at all times. It is we who superimpose our restlessness upon that ever present perfect peace. If you can, harmonise with that peace. Be one with it. If possible generate peace and add to it.

While we are trying to be at peace with ourselves and invoke peace from within by the methods that have been suggested, we may counter a different problem. We may be at peace with ourselves, but when we move among other people we come into contact with people who are not at peace and their restlessness sometimes is infectious. This infection is transferred to us. In the presence of any angry man you also become excited. In the presence of a serene man your anger subsides. So it is infectious. When we constantly move amidst people who are always in a state of agitation, restlessness, fighting, quarreling, excited and irritable, it becomes very difficult to keep our peace. So how can you deal with this? I will tell you one or two wise little hints which Masters of Wisdom have given us. No matter how dark the night around you, if you have a little lamp, you can find your way. You can reach your destination. So be a light unto yourself. Carry your own peace. Abide in it. The darkness around you cannot bother you. If you are firmly established, you will be able to pass through this universe, full of restlessness, yet, manage to maintain your peace.

Every day on your way to work you have to pass through a very unsavoury locality which is always stinking with rotten garbage. It is revolting, but what can you do? You cannot purchase tons of eau-de-cologne and other scents and try to

sprinkle it over all the garbage. But you can have some nice scent on the tip of your handkerchief and the lapel of your dress and keep it near your nose when you pass through that area and thus you would have conquered the situation. You have to walk across a jungle, full of sharp flinty stones and thorny bushes. What do you do? You make for yourself a pair of very serviceable strong leather shoes and you can cover miles and miles of forest, no matter how flinty the rocks and how sharp the thorns. So far as you are concerned they are as good as not being there. So, we cannot change the world, we cannot alter the nature of all people. May be, within your own home, your place of work and in the bus in which you commute, there are all sorts of people. You cannot carry a magic wand and try to change them. There is a limit to your ability to change people and things around you.

But you are a master of yourself. You can bring about a change in yourself. A great, wise master once said: "Towards those who are lesser than you, inferior to you, in any way, may be in age, education, culture, in wealth, status, authority, talent, or may be in natural endowment, have an attitude of kindness. Do not be annoyed and upset with them. Be kind and compassionate towards those who are lesser than you. Feel a sense of friendliness towards your equals and rejoice in their success and good fortune. Replace jealousy, envy and a sense of competition with genuine friendliness of the heart. One always tends to become agitated, jittery and nervous in the presence of superiors—those who are superior in any way, in status, strength, power, wealth, or learning—and loses one's peace of mind. Towards such people, consciously cultivate an attitude of serenity. Always be serene and unruffled. You will go through this agitated world, enjoying your peace, and when you are at peace, you will have happiness also.

This is with regard to the outer world of people. What about this outer world of things, happenings and events? Sometimes we have certain desires that are fulfilled and sometimes they are not fulfilled. If fulfilment gives you elation and disappointment gives you depression, it is no good. You will always be at the mercy of these events. So be contented under all circumstances. Be cheerful, no matter what happens. Rejoice if something turns up just as you want it, feel happy if something turns up to the contrary, feel happy even if something turns up in a third way; rejoice in the Lord's Will and feel happy. It is His world. It is His dispensation. If it is shining, are you not glad? If it is raining, are you not glad? This philosophy of life where you accept everything as ultimately for the good will bring you peace.

Always rejoice in everything and at all times, because there is a valid reason why a thing is what it is and why it is not what it is not. Nothing happens without a reason. The All-Wise being is working out a plan according to His own dispensation. You may not be able to see the reason immediately but you will realise it later on. Everything turns out for the good. Therefore, you should take all events with this attitude of acceptance and rejoicing, knowing that the wisdom of God is behind it. There must be some reason, therefore accept everything; you stand to gain in every way if you keep contented and cheerful and by the same law you stand to lose if you allow yourself to become elated and depressed by everything. Therefore, in your own interest, come what may, rejoice, be serene, be happy and do not allow anything to touch and spoil your inner happiness.

Develop this philosophy of life, this outlook, and your peace will be maintained, and where there is peace there is happiness. Rejoice in the happiness of others. Trust in God and be serene. Above all things, do not allow anything to affect

your inner peace. Then only are you wise. Then only do you have the key to happiness, and who does not want happiness? The key to happiness is peace, and that key to peace I have tried to put before you, in some way. By no means have I covered the whole subject, but even these little things if you put into practice, I promise that you will begin to have greater peace progressively in spite of the restlessness around you and through peace you will also find happiness. Peace and happiness go together. You cannot separate them. Wisdom lies in evolving peace within ourselves and finding it in our dealings with the world. Happiness will follow as a matter of course.

CHAPTER - 2 REAL IDENTITY OF HUMAN BEINGS

KNOW THYSELF

If, for a moment, we cast our eyes upon the vibrant and dynamic life upon the surface of the globe today, immediately we see that tremendous advances have been made in the past couple of centuries. Man has progressed, tapped new resources, discovered more about things than ever was known before. By his ingenuity and scientific acumen, he has evolved such instruments that things which could not even be perceived are now laid bare before the gaze of the human eye—*instruments of such magnifying power that nearly invisible phenomena and cosmic phenomena alike are revealed to the penetrating eye of the scientist.* So great are the achievements that have been made in the field of the physical sciences—in physics, chemistry, mechanics, engineering, electronics, etc.—and so much greater is the control that man holds over external forces that life is now filled with innumerable comforts and conveniences for enjoyment. Such advances, such improvements, such wonderful progress has been made that this modern life might have been thought impossible, fantastic, sheerly fanciful even a hundred years ago. What might have been considered a dream creation then has, nevertheless, become a fact now.

However, let us take a second glance and observe mankind itself. We see vast masses of people in different parts of the globe, with an improved material lot, but without a corresponding improvement in inner satisfaction and peace, which improvement ought to have been the result of the progress in the external sciences. If man is to improve and advance, he must do so on all levels and in all spheres of life and activity.

There is no doubt that efficiency has been raised and organisation has been widened. But, why is increased happiness in the life of the individual not apparent? There are strange imbalances existing between groups which enjoy great prosperity and groups which suffer in abject poverty. In one area there is tremendous wealth and affluence; in another there is impoverishment and starvation. Even in the life of the average man, there is prosperity together with sorrow, convenience together with discontent, both at the same time. Man's possessions have been increased, but his joy—his essential joy of living—has clearly not been increased. If a census were taken, no one could honestly say, "Yes, I think that all these material improvements have put us into a state of perennial joy and unalloyed happiness."

Even in the physical welfare of human beings, real progress is dubious. The number of hospitals has increased beyond compare; doctors, medicines, chemical factories, the manufacture of drugs and various methods of surgery have all increased tenfold; but diseases have multiplied by leaps and bounds. The farther mankind progresses in science, the more prevalent become the new kinds of diseases and sufferings which afflict man on earth. Could there be any reason for this?

The Basic Neglect of the Study of Man

There is a simple reason. Man is, ultimately, the most important unit in this universe. In his hands lies the key to the direction to be taken by human affairs. Over storms, tides, earthquakes, drought, whirlwinds, cyclones—over the universal elements—man has no control; but in so far as the life of the individual is concerned—be it in the family, in the community, in the civic centre, in the capital, in the nation, or in the world—in so far as this life, in all its various and ever-widening aspects is concerned—the control does lie in the

hands of man. Man is the director of these affairs.

He can say, "Yes, let us continue in this direction" or "No, now let us change from this direction and take that direction instead". With this most important unit of life, namely man, not everything is all right. While advances are being made in all the fields of external nature, man's own nature is being neglected.

"The greatest study of mankind is man." The human being has to understand himself. He has to understand his own nature. It is in the knowledge of oneself that the laws that govern life are discovered and the factors that determine human behaviour are revealed. With a knowledge of the forces within, one learns to apply the laws that govern those forces and thus properly direct one's own behaviour. If this essential knowledge is not made the object of one's serious study and seeking, if the basic knowledge of oneself is overlooked, then not all the knowledge of external things—no matter how vast or impressive this latter may be—can bring about a real state of progress in man's world.

At present, there is a total eclipse of this knowledge of one's own nature. With this inadequacy in human knowledge, basic degeneracy in human nature is the natural result. Power makes the human being selfish, ego-centred and greedy. The phenomenon of power-grabbing is so common that it is to be seen in all parts of the globe today. Each confined community is protecting its own interests, wishing to acquire all knowledge and power for itself and is, therefore, setting itself in opposition to all the rest of humanity. Also, each community is afflicted with the dangerous urge to make use of the power thus acquired for the destruction of all those except the few with whom it identifies itself.

This is the picture of the precarious state of affairs at this turn of the first half of the twentieth century. We see that

real progress has been vitiated, that progress has been perverted, due to a lack of refinement in the nature of the human being. If, as man had progressed in controlling external nature, he had also gained the knowledge of himself; if, as he had refined the code of etiquette, he had also improved the quality of his being by increasing its capacity for love, its capacity for compassion, its capacity for putting service before self, its capacity for sacrifice; if progress such as this had kept pace with the progress arising out of man's mastery over external forces, then the whole picture today would be one of balance and well-being in all the communities of the world. There would be more happiness. There would be more brotherhood and friendship. There would be more mutual co-operation.

The imbalance between the outward advances made by human society and the basic degeneracy undergone by the human individual is the root cause of the unhappy state in which humanity finds itself today—a state fraught with fear, uncertainty, and a sense of insecurity. The question is: when so much knowledge has been acquired and so much power has been obtained during the past century, knowledge and power hitherto beyond the reach of man, why is there such a deep feeling in all human hearts that this is hardly a period worth living? People do not want to think about the present. Either they project themselves into a future Utopia where man perhaps would have solved all his present problems or they think wistfully of the past "when things were better". The present seems to be a present full of unrest. This attitude is due to the one basic error of the human being. The entire power of his mind, his perceptions and his senses has been totally externalised. He has not tried, first of all, to start from the proper starting point.

If man does not know himself, how can his life be lived

successfully? It is like a person who is familiar only with the art of driving a car upon a long and hazardous journey, perhaps for thousands of miles, without knowing one bit of the mechanism of the vehicle which is to carry him all the way to his destination. He is actually in a precarious position at every moment, for if the mechanism goes out of order, he will not know how to assess its condition or make the necessary repairs. That is the position of those in the present day who recognize that things have gone wrong, but who do not know exactly how to make corrections. Not all the psychiatrists and psychologists can convince people that they have unearthed the basic knowledge that is required for this repair work.

Who Am I ?—The Great Enquiry

The knowledge of oneself is the required knowledge. And the education in this knowledge has to start right from childhood. It is only when the art of right thinking is taught in childhood that true progress ensues in the life of the individual. We have, first of all, to understand what we are, and what are those factors in our personality that will increase its beauty, and what are those factors that will mar that beauty. How many people take time to think about themselves? Throughout our lives, we think about our engagements, our week-end plans, our pleasures and our pets. We think about what type of dress we shall have, what new model of car we shall buy, what type of house painting we shall afford. At every moment, things which are outside of ourselves occupy our attention. Who spends half an hour every day in calmness and silence? Who asks, "Who am I? How I came here? What is this world in which I am living where a little while ago I was not and a little while from now I will not be? What is the connection between me and this universe, between me and those around me with whom I have a temporary relationship? In this temporary ever-changing set-up, what is my duty?" These questions you do

not take time to ponder over. Unless and until you find the answer to them and obtain the essential knowledge of what you really are, whence you have come and where abides your ultimate destiny, effective and purposeful living will lie far off in the future for you. You will be no happier while departing from this world than when you were coming into it; and you will not leave this earth a better and improved place (by virtue of its receiving greater light and joy) for your having been here.

You Are Not the Body

These have ever been the central questions of Hindu philosophy. Both the ancient sages and the modern Masters have ever tried to bring about an awakening in man so that this earth-life might be properly used to get an essential knowledge of the Self. The ignorant, the idiotic, the stupid or the foolish think that the body is one's own self. Man's idea of himself is: "I am five feet, nine inches tall; I weigh so many pounds; I am so many years old, etc." What greater folly, what greater ignorance, what greater blindness or stupidity could there be than to identify oneself with this perishable cage of bones, this gross composition of flesh and muscles and skin! After all, what is this physical sheath if it is not wholly dependent upon perishable food? When food is administered to it, the body grows, but when it is withdrawn, the body is finished. Are you this—this absolutely abject thing—dependent so entirely upon materials which are themselves subject to decay? But that is what the majority of people say.

This body is not yourself. This body came into being only a little while ago. Its fate is to become disintegrated and dissolved soon. You—you cannot be this body. You can never feel that you will cease to exist. The idea that you have ceased to exist is unthinkable for you. By your very nature, such a thought is absolutely inconceivable and impossible. The

consciousness will never permit you to do so, for even as you postulate, "I do not exist", you feel yourself to be the maker of this statement. You feel yourself to be beyond the very idea.

It is in folly, in blindness, in sheer thoughtlessness that one considers the body to be oneself. The body is merely the object of your perception. You can look at it and speak about it as you would refer to a desk or a chair. It cannot, therefore, be the subject, the seer or the perceiver. After all, you are able to say, "My body, my hands, my feet, my head"; and even if you were to lose your limbs, you would not feel that you had been lost. No aspect of your personality would have been reduced by the loss of your limbs. You would still feel that you were all right, unharmed and intact. You conclude that you are the perceiver of the body which is merely an object of your perception.

You Are Not the Mind

Consciousness cannot be dependent upon the senses. Could the aggregate of the senses be yourself—the sense of sight, smell, taste, touch and hearing together with the sense-centres in the brain which make them work? If you do not hear, the loss of hearing does not make you lose your individuality; similarly, the loss of sight or smell does not make you lose your personality. And when you go into the deep-sleep state where all the ten senses are totally inoperative, and as it were dead, You are still there. You are able to posit your continuous existence. When you get up, you say, "I am the one who went to sleep, and now, I am the awakener. I am able to say that I have enjoyed my sleep".

What is this "I" which continues to exist even in the depths of deep, dreamless sleep, when the consciousness of the body and the external world are absent and the functions of the mind are discontinued? You are in existence during deep sleep when the body is totally inert, when the senses

and the mind do not function and when the intellect is no longer active. Immediately upon awakening, You take up the thread of your personality-consciousness as though it had never been absent, and you say, "I went to sleep and I enjoyed a good rest. Now I have awakened refreshed". What is this mysterious factor independent of the activity of the senses and the functions of the mind and intellect which enables you to feel continued consciousness of "being"? Even if you were affected by amnesia and suffered a total loss of memory, so that all things constituting your previous personality were totally wiped out and effaced from your consciousness (even as something written on the blackboard is erased by a duster), you would say, "I don't know" or "I don't remember". This I-awareness is never lost. What is this I-awareness which is independent of all phases of personality including even the all-important memory?

The Universal Factors: "I" and "I Am"

When you go deep within yourself, it becomes apparent that this *I*, your very Self, is something that links you so very close to all humanity and to all life upon earth, that it is universal. Consider a vast group of people of different nationalities, races, religions, beliefs and castes—everyone totally different from everyone else in name and form, in language, in thought pattern, in colour, in creed, in dress, in manner of eating, drinking and sleeping, in short, in everything. You will find to your amazement that every one of these totally different beings says "I", "I", "I" and, also, says "I am". He may be an African Hottentot, he may be an Eskimo of Alaska, he may be a Malaysian, an Arab, a European, a Canadian, a Hindu or a Buddhist, but he invariably says "I". This feeling of *I* and *I am*, therefore, is unlike those factors that split people apart and make them remarkably different. This is definitely a common universal factor. This is the factor

that knits humanity into subtle oneness.

Wrong Identifications Destroy Universality

We have seen that everyone says "I" and "I am", and thus far everyone is perfectly all right, everyone is in accord with all other beings upon earth. But then, from this second word onwards, man voices his ignorance. He proceeds with "I am an American", "I am a Canadian", "I am a Hindu", "I am a Republican". Whatever he adds to "I am", immediately limits his consciousness. It at once vitiates the consciousness of oneness. Thus when you say "I am", you are at one with all mankind; but when you say "I am So-and-so", you separate yourself and create a barrier between yourself and every human being contrary to you. You immediately cut yourself off from the rest of the world and regard others as inimical to yourself, opposed to yourself, and what is worse, harmful to yourself. Herein lies colossal ignorance. Herein lies the necessity for the utmost clarity of thought. Here it is that you have to make use of your intelligence.

If your intellect is to be your friend and ally in this life, it is here that it may be used to render you a very great service—used in its highly purified form and not blinded by delusion or by personal like and dislike which involve and enmesh it in the appetites and attachments of the lower sense and desire nature. If your intellect, your pure reason and understanding, is entangled in the lower nature, if it is thus deprived of its freedom, then the pure consciousness of *I am*-ness becomes vitiated. The feeling of universal oneness with all life gets lost. The intellect starts chaining you to misery by binding you to attachment, selfishness, passion, hatred, anger, jealousy, envy, pettiness, meanness, hardness, harshness to others. Due to the perverted work of the intellect, these impure tendencies spring up and produce a separatist mentality and a confined consciousness of the individual personality.

Again, *I am-ness* makes you feel at one with the entire universe, but saying "I am a human being" at once circumscribes you into a particular species—the human species. You feel, "I am not that creature". You say, "Kick that dog", "Kill that rat", "Crush that bug", "Shoot that rabbit". You thus separate yourself from all other species. And then, after saying, "I am a human being", you say, "I am white", and the whole world of the non-white races becomes something outside of you. You create a barrier and it does not end even there. You narrow your consciousness still further by saying, "I am a Frenchman" or "I am an American", and then "I am a Parisian" or "I am a New Yorker", until you are made less and less, so confined indeed that your heart, instead of expanding, becomes narrow and constricted. It means that you are in the process of stifling your spirit and choking up the universality of your true being, your pure consciousness and your natural spiritual essence. That is death. Confining your spirit into smaller and smaller rings is the same as going to the very root of life or the Fount of Life and there trying to choke it. The Fount of Life overflows and pervades the entire universe, but by confining yourself, you are withholding that fluent inner expression of peace, thwarting its natural and spontaneous outflow. By identifying yourself with passing aspects of your being such as the pigment of skin, faith, class or creed, etc., you are losing all the vastness and elation of the universal consciousness which is yours. You deprive yourself of the true and exalted experience of your Self. You no longer know your Self. You know but a pale, insufficient, false shadow of your true Self. You then weep, because you go against the very law of life.

Expansion is joy. Oneness is joy. Coming out of your little self is becoming fearless. The more you confine yourself to a narrow conception of individuality, the greater the

limitation that results. There is bound to arise fear, differences, enmity and hatred; and peace, which is the essential nature of the being, is lost. When love is thus contradicted by the confinement of consciousness, how can there be happiness? It is love that brings light and happiness into the life of the human being. Love is the essential stuff of your being.

You Are Existence-Consciousness-Bliss

Now, this much becomes clear. When you say "I am", you assert your Existence. This Existence is your true nature, and this Existence is for ever. This Existence is indestructible, because it is not a created thing like the body of the five elements and because it is not identical with any of those non-essential factors of your being like the body, etc.; it is independent of them all. It is changeless. Mind constantly changes, takes on new ideas and sheds old ideas. There is constant flux in your mind. This mind, which is ever in a state of change and movement and flux, cannot be the eternal factor in you. The eternal factor is Existence. You are indestructible, imperishable Existence. Everlasting Life is your true and essential being. That is your nature.

You are also Consciousness or Awareness. You are not inert or insentient, and since you know that you exist, therefore, there is Knowledge in you. It is also a part of your essential nature. Thus, you exist; and you are conscious of your Existence, you have knowledge of your Existence. You are Self-aware.

You are Existence, Consciousness and Bliss. When you know that you are that pure Existence-Consciousness and also when you know simultaneously that you are not that which is constantly agitating you, then you become totally devoid of all the defects and imperfections of the lower perishable aspects of your being. All pain, all sorrow, all fear, all grief, all suffering is for the body. To suffer pain is the fate

of the body. To experience grief, delusion, jealousy, passion, desire, joy and sorrow, fear and affection, is the fate of the mind. When you know yourself as independent of the body, independent of the mind—distinct and different from these two—then how can you allow these facts that characterise the two lower aspects of your being to affect you or even touch you? You are without pain, without suffering, without sorrow, without delusion, without like and dislike, without all those blemishes which characterise the mind and intellect. Thus you are essentially full of joy. Your true nature is Bliss. You are Existence-Consciousness-Bliss.

This *I am* is distinct from the body-mind part of your being and devoid of all its blemishes and defects. You are of the nature of bliss and that Bliss can never be touched no matter what afflictions, what changes and vicissitudes you, as a human being, have to experience on the lower levels of your being. Such experiences go only as far as the mind, and if you allow it, as far as the intellect, but beyond that they cannot go. They cannot touch You. They cannot approach You even remotely, for You are truly Existence-Consciousness-Bliss, eternal and absolute, incorruptible and changeless. Know Thyself as such. The true nature of the individual is verily this.

You Are God Even Now

This is the nature of the highest illumined soul who knows this. It is the nature of the intelligent, thinking man who is often puzzled, who sometimes seems to know this and again seems not to know this. It is also the nature of the ignorant man who is unlettered and does not even know how to think. It is the nature of the fool and the idiot. No matter what state of evolution or what state of unfoldment or manifestation of the inner spiritual consciousness you find yourself in, essentially, inwardly, in truth and in fact, you are Existence-

Consciousness-Bliss. Even at this moment. Nothing can rob you of that.

This knowledge is your greatest wealth. This is the wealth of all wealth. This is what you have to unfold. You have come here only in order to realise this. You have come here to know Thyself. This Truth shall make you free. You are, in fact, ever free, even now free, for this Truth abides aside from the fact that you are unaware of it. This Truth cannot be taken away. It is ever-existent. Your not knowing It does not affect the fullness of your Existence one whit.

This Truth of your being is the one subject upon which you should ponder and reflect, upon which you should meditate. This Truth you should try to realise. Above all, your life should be an expression of this inner Truth. Your life should be a spontaneous demonstration of this, your true Bliss-nature within, and not an expression merely of that nature which does not belong to you, even though as a human being, you have both these parts. You cannot run away from the part which is not really you, which is false, which has a beginning and an end, which is corruptible and perishable.

Your true and essential nature is one with the Universal Consciousness which people call God, which people worship as the Supreme Being but by different names: Allah and Jehovah and Ishvara and Brahman and Almighty Father. It does not matter what name you give It—It is God. He is the supreme, infinite, eternal Existence Absolute. He is the Universal Being, the One Common Consciousness (underlying all humanity) which knits and unites mankind and fills the entire universe with happiness. He is that great, unfailing, perennial Fountain of Joy.

In your essential nature, you are That. You are eternally linked with that Infinite Ocean of Joy and Bliss and Wisdom. If you realise that, your whole life blossoms forth into a radiance

of love, into a radiance of bliss, into a radiance of happiness and peace and serenity. Every day try to make a point of being conscious of what you really are. Make yourself God-centred. Become one with the Existence Principle which is even in a blade of grass, a speck of dust, a wisp of cloud, and in every mode and expression of life. Feeling yourself one with all, how could you hurt others? How could you bring yourself to be false or cruel? How could you bring yourself to deceive others or to play them false? How could you bring yourself to hate or to be angry ?

Walk with God: Talk with God

This is the view and the vision that man, both as an individual and as collective humanity, needs today. When Professor Einstein once was asked in a certain interview, "What shall we do, Professor, in order to improve the world?", he said, "We must have improved people". That means we must live in the consciousness of our true nature. Even if a few people, a handful of people, make it their firm resolution, their greatest aim and aspiration in life, not to live any longer as mere mundane creatures, but to feel themselves divine, to be always at one with the Divine Essence, then real progress will have been made. Live in this way every day.

Make this your aspiration: "I will not feel myself as the body or as the senses. I will not feel myself as the imperfect intellect full of desire and delusion. I will always feel myself as I really and truly am". If you make this your determination, Light will enter your whole life. It will fill your home. Wherever you go, people will see that you bring brightness with you. Sick people will begin to feel well. You will become a centre for the radiation of Truth.

You have come here to live like gods, walk like gods, talk like gods, act like gods and feel like gods, for verily you are all children of the Divine. You are eternally one with Him

who is all-perfect, all-pure, all-conscious and all-wise. This great fact is the central fact of your life. It is the most precious treasure of every human heart. You must always feel yourself radiating the Divine Essence within. You must look with the Eyes of God; you must touch with the Feeling of God; your heart must throb with the Nature of God. It must be full of love for all humanity.

To know Yourself is to feel yourself connected to the Perennial Fount of Joy. In silence, know that you are Divine. Then live in that Silence. Grow day by day into a greater realization of that Joyful Awareness. Such a life ultimately expands your consciousness into the Universal. The attainment of Cosmic Consciousness is knowing that you are part and parcel of the Divine Essence. Every other task in life has only a relative significance. Perhaps, being caught in this framework as we are, we may not reject other things completely, but they are only secondary. If you fulfil all the so-called tasks of this life without knowing *Yourself*, your life would be wasted. But if, in your own humble measure, this one Truth has been pursued, attained and felt within as your own personal experience, then no matter how you may have fulfilled the other tasks, you will have lived your life fully, gloriously and successfully. Out of you, untold blessings will come to those who accompany you in this life.

This Divine Life is the sole task of your mortal existence. From Divinity has your being been brought. In Divinity let your life be led—even while in this embodied condition. Eternal Divinity is your ultimate destination. As life leads to Glory, let it be lived in Glory. Let your life be crowned with Supreme Fulfilment. Let Bliss and Truth be your only experience, and let Peace, Serenity and Love be your only bestowal upon this world in which we live. Know Thyself and be Divine—and be Divinely Blissful!

CHAPTER - 3

TRUE PURPOSE OF HUMAN LIFE

YOUR LIFE ON EARTH : KNOW ITS PURPOSE

WHAT is the meaning of your being here in this temporary embodied condition? If life is to result towards any attainment, we have to live it meaningfully. We must be aware of what purpose, what deeper significance life holds for us, other than its external biological processes. What is the meaning of life? If you asked a medical man or biologist, he might tell you; "Clinically, a man is said to be alive if his heart is functioning, if he is respiring and if his blood is pulsating through his body". So, if there is circulation, respiration and the other metabolic processes : going on in the body, they declare a person to be alive. And if these processes have come to an end, they say, "He is dead". Life, according to them, is equated to the metabolic processes, the biological function of the various parts of the inner mechanism of the body — heart. . .lungs. . .is that life?" Evidently, that falls far short of your concept of life. That is merely existence, a biological existence.

You are more than that. You think, feel; you are an intelligent being, a rational being. So you may say: "It is sentiment, emotion, fulfilment of the desires and enjoying things around you, sensations". You would add all these to your definition of life. "We are more than plant, more than insect or animal. We are human. We must enjoy life in a higher way" — this would be the common-man's concept of life. Sense-experience, desire-fulfillment— towards these man works, acquires the things that are necessary to supply pleasant sensations and enable him to fulfil the desires of the inner psychological being.

But, illumined souls with a greater vision, a deeper vision of you, have seen even beyond the psychological self of man. They declare that he is not only more than breathing, living, metabolic processes, but he is even more than the psychological functions and activities of feeling, sentiment, emotion, thought, reason, memory, imagination, willing, resolving, determining and purposeful fulfillment of the desires of the psychological personality. More than this there is something in man, something higher, something beyond, which in their vision they saw to be superior. For this reason: that the biological, physical being is temporary. It has a beginning and an end. It is subject to decay and ultimate dissolution.

Even so, the psychological man has a beginning and an end. Man's mind is unstable, unreliable; it is ever-changing. Your thoughts can change. Your opinions can change. Your views and attitudes can change. You may feel towards a person in a particular way at a certain moment, at a certain period. After, may be a couple of years, your feeling might completely alter. You are a totally different person! Your relationship to that person completely alters. It is no longer what it was two years back. So, it is changeful. It is not stable, not reliable. There is no uniformity in it. There is no continuity in it. It is subject to constant alteration. And it is all the personal experience of each and every one of you.

The seers of yore saw beyond this changeful psychological level of the human personality, something that was ever stable, permanent, enduring, upon which you could count, you could rely, you could be absolutely sure and certain about. And it is in that depth that they saw the reality of man. Man is an Eternal Spirit enfolded or involved in thought and intellectual processes, and temporarily residing in a gross physical receptacle, a body, a cage of flesh and bones—the mind and intellect being his media to express the Spirit upon

the secular plane, earth-plane.

It is this vision that illumined seers, men of God, masters of wisdom, had of man, that brought forth the phenomenon of the life spiritual. They declared to man: "O man! You are a traveller on this earth-plane. You do not belong here in the ultimate analysis. You come from a realm of eternal sunshine. You come from a realm of everlasting life. In your innermost depth you are part of that everlasting substance, the Eternal Essence, the principle that is without beginning, without end. You have no birth, you have no death. You have no change or decay or destruction. For you are a spiritual entity. You have come into this earth-plane and found yourself in a temporary state of embodiment. And your mission in life is to make use of the faculties—physical, mental and intellectual—with which you are endowed. Utilise them in a right and purposeful way to bring about an awakening of that spiritual awareness, a consciousness of your all-perfect and eternal being: 'I am in reality that which has no birth and no death, no beginning and no end. I am in reality that which decays not. There is no disease, no old age, no change or decay. I am in reality that which is deathless, that which is permanent, everlasting, ever-pure, shining with wisdom-consciousness—the Light of lights. I am Peace. I am Bliss. I am Wisdom, I am complete and whole. I lack nothing. Therefore, no desires have I, no cravings, for I am complete'".

Your mission in life is to rise into this experience of a Self-awareness which by itself liberates you from all the bondage you have at present come into, which by itself liberates you from this finite existence, liberates you from all limitations, liberates you from the bonds of desire, liberates you from the shackles of sense-cravings and urges, and restores you once again to your native state, pristine state of a totally free consciousness, fearlessness, freedom and an

awareness of wholeness. "I lack nothing. I am complete in myself. I rejoice in myself. I am sufficient in myself. I am Joy. I am Bliss. I am Peace". This is Self-realisation or an experience of Self-awareness of your own higher being, your eternal inalienable spiritual nature, which is perfect.

This is the great mission in life of every individual soul that has acquired this human status. Beings in a lesser level of consciousness, animal, plant, they have not this ability, for they have not this awakened reasoning and thinking power. Man alone can question: "Who am I? Why am I here? From whence am I here? And what am I here for?" This ability to question, whence ? whither ? wherefore ? why?—this is unique to that soul in the human status *only*, not to any other form of life. And that human being justifies his human status who puts these deep questions to himself. :

This faculty of intellect has, as its highest function, this inner philosophical inquiry : "What is life? What is the relationship between me and this external universe?" Inquire into the real nature of this life on earth. Inquire into the real nature of things that surround you, so that you may know what their real value is, if there is any; so that you may not just be attracted by them blindly, drawn towards them, enslaved by them, held in thrall by the external glitter and attraction of passing things, of temporary and evanescent things. Always question, use reason which has made you man—the thinking being, the rational animal'.

If reason is not put to this use of inner analysis and philosophical inquiry, then man does not justify his human status. Though he has acquired the form of man, a vertical being with two legs, the form of a biped, yet he fails to be man in fact.

Make use of your faculty of inner reason and intellect to try to unravel the mystery of creation, the mystery of this

life, the mystery of your own Self, because a great, great many of us go through life in blindness and ignorance. We have managed to acquire through our mind, intellect, observation, a vast amount of information about things around us, about this external world of phenomena, about processes that we find going on in nature, in plants, in animals, in fish, in fowl, in minerals, in chemical elements. But, in the midst of this vast store of information which the ordinary education gives through books, through tapes, through lecture classes, through our own observation, there persists a nucleus of darkness, a nucleus of essential ignorance as to our own nature.

Man is not aware of who he is in reality, why he is here, what is his true Inner Reality. He goes, surrounded by this plethora of apparent knowledge, but lacking in essential wisdom—in spiritual darkness, self-forgetfulness, non-awareness of one's own true being. And if life were to pass in this same condition and he is to exit out of life in this state of spiritual darkness, alas! the highest purpose of life, the supreme purpose to fulfil which he has come, to fulfil which God has endowed him with this wonderful faculty of feeling, thinking and reasoning, that supreme purpose would be unattained. He would go still a bound creature, in ignorance, in darkness, in a state of spiritual slumber.

Those who have gone before us have plunged into this inner research, investigating the answer to these questions and they have done a great deal of work for you and me, so that we do not have to start from scratch. We do not have to do all the spade-work. They have given us the fruit of their labours and in this sense, modern man, man in this twentieth century, belongs to one of the most fortunate generations in human history. For, on the eve of the fourth quarter of the twentieth century, we stand inheritors of a wonderful heritage of spiritual wisdom.

During recent generations, during the past two or three centuries, the world has produced such great, phenomenal personalities endowed with God-realisation, divine experience, spiritual wisdom that we have consequently been left as one of the most fortunate and richest generations that has ever filtered out through human history. For we are the direct heirs to the rich heritage of this common, universal wealth that past generations have evolved and left for us.

If man were not to avail himself of this wonderful treasure of divine wisdom, we cannot blame the past generations. We have to squarely lay the blame upon ourselves. God gave us everything and yet we have not the wisdom to utilise it all and attain the highest state.

Now, let us take a look at some home truths that these inquiries have given to us. The first is, that no matter how uncertain life on earth may be, especially in this twentieth century, in this nuclear space age—we do not seem to know what is waiting for us there tomorrow—, there is one absolute certainty about which there is no argument, there is no debate, there is no difference of opinion, there cannot be two views. That absolute certainty is, that one day we all have to go! One day we all have to leave this earth-plane. We are not going to be here continuously, because life is short, time is fleeting, body is perishing. It has had a beginning in time and it has an end in time. Well, you may say: "You are just uttering a truism. Everyone knows that. So what?" Yes, everyone knows it, but no one does anything about it.

If you are always living in the awareness of this certainty of 'one day I have to go', would you ever neglect to do what is to be done? Would you ever postpone, procrastinate, just ignore? Would you ever neglect to do what you have to do—your duties, secular and, more than that, spiritual? Would you postpone working to fulfil the most

important mission in life, namely, to know yourself ? To awake and unfold the spiritual awareness without which life would be empty, barren of content, only be a surface life of sensation and a little bit of chaotic restless thought and desire, leaving you in a whirl, unsatisfied, discontent, without a sense of fulfilment.

How many of us are really making use of this awareness, namely, that 'one day I must go', and therefore I must be up and doing, not only upon the outer path of human relationship and earthly duties, but also upon the inner path of my own spiritual mission, my highest unfoldment, the Supreme Good, knowing which everything becomes known, attaining which all these are added unto us ? How many of us are earnest ? In how many of us, this awareness of the inevitable—call it death—having to journey forth from here—is goading us to be dynamic in our spiritual life ? To be progressive in our inner life ? We know, but we do nothing about it.

Therefore, the great masters of wisdom, saints and sages, remind us constantly: "O man ! With every sunrise and every sunset, one day of your life is lost! By so much your span of life has become shortened, so much less time you have to do whatever you have to do. Therefore, Arise! Awake! Do not postpone. Be up and doing. Be active upon the spiritual life".

The second great truth is that you are a citizen of two worlds simultaneously. When you took birth and came into this world as an embodied being, the very fact of your having acquired this physical body brought you into a relational pattern with a number of persons. Someone was father, someone was brother, someone was mother, someone sister, someone uncle, someone grandfather, grandmother — relationship with things, people. And all of life is an expansion

of this relationship. But then, you should not forget. It is the body that is related to people around you in this physical world. But, to whom are you related? Whence did you come? Are you not related to some source, some invisible origin, root of your being, from which, has come forth your spiritual reality?

You, in the innermost depth of your being, are the Imperishable Dweller in this perishable body, the ever-pure and ever-peaceful Reality behind this impure and restless mind. You are the infinite, changeless, spiritual Reality beyond the perishable, the finite and the changeful body, mind and intellect. You are the imperishable, ever-pure, ever-peaceful, limitless spiritual Essence.

In this depth and dimension of your being, you are not of this phenomenon. You are uncreated. You are not a created phenomenon. You are not a process. You are complete in yourself. And in that level of life, in that plane of consciousness, you are not an earth-creature. You belong to a spiritual realm which is your true abode, your eyer-lasting dwelling place, where there is only Existence, Consciousness and Bliss Absolute, where there is Sat, Chit and Ananda, Being, Consciousness and Bliss. That is Peace. That is Perfection. That is Wholeness. Even while the body dwells on this earth-plane, physical, materialistic plane, even while the body functions in this created world of processes and phenomena, you live, move and have your being in the Divine. Only, you have lost your awareness.

Here and now you dwell in the Universal Spirit! You live in that Divine Essence which pervades all existence, which is within, without, envelops you, pervades the whole earth and interpenetrates your innermost being.

You can escape from everything, but you cannot escape from the Spirit. You cannot escape from the Reality. For it is here. That is the Truth! Become aware: "I dwell in

God, I breathe God, I breathe the Divine, I live in the Divine, I move in the Divine, I exist in the Divine. And the Divine exists in me. It lives and moves and breathes in me. My awareness, my consciousness is the Divine Principle within me—the awareness of Being".

Therefore, simultaneously with your phenomenal life, you are also a citizen of that spiritual realm, the Divine Kingdom, the Kingdom of God, the Kingdom of Heaven. Right now at this moment! It is not something to be attained at a distance in time, at some remote future. And the awakening into an awareness of this fact is the second great truth one has to cherish in one's mind.

Great masters of wisdom have revealed to us the science of relating ourselves in the most ideal way to both these universes, so that our life may be a thing of beauty, so that our life may be an ever-progressive process which ends in the dazzling light of Christ-consciousness, the dazzling light of Self-realisation. Call it Nirvana, call it Satori, call it Liberation, call it Brahma-Jnana, Wisdom, Illumination. It is a great thing which leaves no regrets, brings supreme satisfaction and fulfils your life, where your life becomes totally successful, where you fulfil the purpose of your very being.

The masters gave two ideals to develop your relationship between these two universes, on the threshold of which, in the middle of which each individual human soul stands. There, the vast mysterious, untapped, spiritual realm, which is your true realm, your true plane of being, and here, the temporary realm of material objects and beings, through which you but pass for a while and to which you bid adieu in the end. Two great ideals—how can you relate yourself so that this relationship may not become an obstacle in fulfilling that relationship?

The masters said: "Relate yourself as a giver. Seek

through every thought, word and deed to see in what way you can bring something to enrich life while you pass through it. Never think in terms of "What can I get? What can I acquire? What can I hold and keep and accumulate ?" But go like a master. "God has given me this wonderful opportunity, this golden chance while I move through life. In what way can I beautify, enrich life around me? In what way can I serve others? In what way can I help a fellow human being? In what way can I benefit those around me?" Try to make people happy. Go in terms of rising above self, thinking not in terms of this little self and what it can get.

If in this way you are able to rise above self, forget self and try to make life a thing of beauty, a thing, of self-offering, giving, making people happy, bringing peace to people, then you set into motion a mysterious Great Law of the universe. You shall never lack. You shall have abundance of life from the Divine. The moment an individual soul ceases to think of himself or herself and starts thinking in terms of how he can enrich life around him, the Universal Consciousness starts thinking about this being. Day and night the Universal Consciousness will start providing all the needs of this soul. This is a law. This is an experienced fact to which all the great ones have been witness. And they have left this experience of theirs for our guidance.

Become great. Become noble. Become magnanimous, large-hearted. Think in terms of giving, never in terms of grabbing or getting. Let not the mind think small, think petty, think mean. But let it think in a noble way, sublime way, large-hearted way, and I assure you, I promise you that you will never lack in any way whatsoever. Everything that is needed for your life here will be supplied to the minutest detail, and no mistake. The Divine takes all the responsibility of that soul which ceases to think of itself and gives of itself for the good

of all, for the benefit of God's creation, God's great family.

And the second principle: this is the ideal way of relating yourself to the world around you, so that your life becomes spiritualised, it becomes part of the evolutionary process, it becomes a supplement to the inner spiritual unfoldment. Far from being an obstacle, outer life becomes a help, a complementary process in terms of the great Spiritual Reality with which your relationship is more lasting, more real, more fundamental, which is for ever.

The only thing to which you are *really* related is the Universal Consciousness, the Father in Heaven, the Almighty Being, the Cosmic Soul. Towards it, the ideal relationship is of seeking and experiencing, entering into it. The relationship can only be brought out in this earth analogy: "Be as a river unto the ocean". Seek ever to flow towards the ocean, to find the ocean and enter into the ocean, lose yourself in the ocean. Let your spirit be a restless river, ever questing, ever flowing onward, ever flowing oceanward, moving towards the ocean. Let all your life be brought together and let it be turned into one concerted flow towards the Divine. Let your life be one great love for the Divine, one great seeking, one great hunger and thirsting for the Divine.

"I shall, in this very body before life ends, attain the Divine and thus crown my life with the Supreme Fulfilment"—this should be your aspiration. This should be your determination. *Live* in order to attain Divine Consciousness. Live to aspire and rise into a state of God-experience. That is the only way you can relate yourself. To love and to aspire. To realise and to enter into your destiny. For ever become established in that state of consciousness. May your life be endowed with these two ideal movements. Towards the universe around you, beings and things, the life around you, a spirit of love and giving. And let your inner life be active and

dynamic and progressive. Keep pace with the outer exterior life and let it ever move upward and Godward and become crowned with that Supreme Experience by which alone man fulfils his divine destiny.

For, you are Divine. You are Pure Spirit and your life is in truth spiritual! The external physical and mental aspects of life are only temporary additives. They are not the essential and real part of your life. They are only the surface aspects of your life. Whereas, deep down, your real life is spiritual, if anything at all. *And, if not spiritual, it is nothing at all.*

CHAPTER - 4

GURU'S GRACE

THE HEART OF THE GURU

We are now approaching the great annual day of worship of those who bring light to dispel the darkness of spiritual ignorance in our interior, who take us from unrealities to the Reality, who enable us to go beyond the ever-recurring, revolving wheel of birth and death into that realm of everlasting, rebirthless life. The celebration of Guru Purnima pays homage to those beings, those great ones, who having reached that abode, having liberated themselves forever, have turned back and engaged themselves in illuminating others, in liberating others.

What is in the heart of these great teachers? Why do they act and engage themselves in ceaseless work when they have no motivation for acting, having fulfilled all that has to be fulfilled? They have done everything that has to be done, attained everything that has to be attained. They have no more wishes, no more desires, no more wants, no more intentions, no more sankalpas.

They thus revel in a state of supreme satisfaction, contentment, for they know that there is nothing more for them to do. Their hearts are full; they desire nothing. And so, if the Lord were to place before them the bounty of all His countless millions of universes and say, "Take this," they will reply: "Keep them, for You have blessed me in a far greater manner. You have taken away from me the shackles of desire. You have graced me with the supreme gift of perfect desirelessness, perfect contentment, perfect fulfilment. What greater blessing can you offer me, O Lord?"

What could be the motivation for such beings to

continue to act when there is no longer any need to act - when they have attained everything and are in a state of supreme plenitude and peace? What does the Indian spiritual genius have to say about the heart of these great ones? It says that if at all one could attribute to them any desire - .if you want an explanation from your point of view -.then you can say that they do have one thought, one intention, one desire, and that is that all sincere seeking souls who are in quest of the Goal Supreme may attain that goal, that they may be in the same state in which they are.

With that one urge from within - a spontaneous urge not arising out of mind, intellect, thought, feeling, emotion or sentiment, because they are established in a state totally beyond, transcending, all these.- there is a spontaneous intention of supreme love and goodwill that all may be established in the great state that they have attained by the grace of the Supreme. That is the only intention with which they act.

And, therefore, when that is the one urge that moves them to act, the least that we can do is to strive to the best of our ability to become like them, to approximate the ideal that they have placed before us by their own ideal life.to respond to their call, to become liberated here and now in this very life, not in the distant future, not in some post-mortem life, but now, here, so that even while in this body we are yet a liberated being, a jivanmukta.

That indeed would be the highest Guru Purnima worship, the highest expression of devotion to the guru. Therefore, striving with all earnestness, all sincerity, ceaselessly try to be like them, aspire to be like them and pray to them: "By my own effort and intention, this will never be possible, because of all my weaknesses, drawbacks and imperfections. May you, therefore, out of your infinite grace,

complete it, make it full and whole."

And, they are ready to do it. The great spiritual master, Paramahansa Ramakrishna, said: "Even if you do one sixteenth of whatever sadhana has been done through this body of mine that will be more than enough. You will attain perfection. You will become a liberated being. You will go beyond all sorrow. You will be established in a state of joy and bliss."

Therefore, let us all be in a state of oneness, let us all join together and collectively make our life a sincere, earnest and grateful response to this great and glorious urge that makes these perfect beings wish to bestow the same perfection upon others, the urge that makes them continue to engage themselves in this great work of awakening the human world into a state of higher awareness of their divine destiny.

Be it so! Let this be your highest worship, highest devotion. Then, verily, Guru Purnima will not merely be a religious day upon the outer secular earth plane of your life, but it will be a great spiritual landmark, a spiritual turning point in your interior unto satchidananda-consciousness. That is what life ought to be, and by the grace of God and the loving benedictions of Gurudev, may it be so! God bless you !

THE ESSENCE OF THE GURU-DISCIPLE RELATIONSHIP

The blessed holy land of India has given us the goal of God-realisation as being the supreme, ultimate, most important and highest goal of human existence. Its ancient wisdom and living spiritual experience went beyond heaven and hell, sin and merit; it went beyond all relativity and soared into the dizzy heights beyond the reach of mind and speech. It entered into a direct, absolute experience of the Great Reality that is supremely non-dual, that is one without a second, beyond all duality, beyond the three gunas, gunatita, beyond the pairs of opposites, nirdvandva. This holy land discovered and gave to us carefully formulated and tested scientific paths to attain this innermost spiritual experience that lies at the heart of all religions, and it has thus put the entire world under a debt of gratitude.

This ashram is situated in a land where the unseen is the real, where man is divine, where life is a process of attaining the realisation of God, and where every action is regarded as part and parcel of this adoration, this worship and this attempt to reach God; the whole of life is pervaded by the spirit of yoga. It is a land where sages, saints, mystics and holy people in each generation have lived the spiritual life of renunciation, austerity, penance, prayer, devotion, worship and deep meditation, and having attained illumination have left behind for us the proof positive that this Reality exists, that this path is valid. If practised in such a way, the same experience can be attained by you, me and everyone.

Thus, spiritual life is a possibility. It is a reality; it is not a fantasy. Through their lives, generation after generation, this great discovery of ancient times was proved to be true again and again. It was tested and not found wanting; it was

tested and found true, authentic, genuine, practicable - yielding results.

The uniqueness of your lives is that you have received this as your heritage, and having received it you have embraced this great ideal, and you have made it your life. You have made your life a spiritual process, a spiritual ascent towards Reality, towards liberation, towards divine perfection. Thus, through your lives, their lives have proved fruitful. "Lives of great men oft remind us that we can make our life sublime." What is the use if no one followed, did not want to become sublime? These great ones would have lived in vain.

But, it is not so. To this day, everywhere in the world their teachings are still benefiting and guiding seeking souls. Therefore, through our lives we vindicate their renunciation and penance, their silence and seclusion, their self-denial and deep spiritual meditations. We vindicate their worth. Thus we are meant to understand life. We are to live to fulfil a great ancient ideal.

But then, the essence of such living is a deep inner conviction of the reality of that great Goal. And the essence of such living would also be an intense desire that we should attain that Goal and also the willingness to pay the price. For the sake of the Goal, a disciple must be willing to give up everything petty, and, most important of all, be willing to give oneself up, to renounce one's little self, to renounce the very reality of one's temporary, earthly being. "Whoever clings to his life shall lose it, and whoever loses his life shall save it." "Kill this little 'I'. Die to live. Lead the divine life."

All great souls have discovered this same truth and have proclaimed it in slightly varying words. "For it is in dying to the little self that one attains to everlasting life." .When shall I be free, O Master?" The Master replies: "When 'I' shall cease to be." The disciple, now knowing, then says: "Then

shall I be free, when 'I' shall cease to be."

Therefore, our ancients have said: "This can be attained through discipleship - tadvidhi pranipatena pariprasnena sevaya. Go to a guru, sit at his feet and ask for his knowledge." The guru says: "Yes, I am here to remove the ignorance that is your bondage and give you knowledge. I am the surgeon who will remove the cataract and restore your vision." But then, if the patient says: "No, no, no, I want my vision restored, but I do not want my cataract removed; it is mine, I like it, it is part of me; cure my blindness without removing the cataract," then the surgeon will say: "Sorry sir, that is not possible. The cataract is something that you do not require. It is your enemy not your friend, your liability not an asset. You have to get rid of it. I am helping to remove the obstruction to your vision so you can once again see, to bring light in place of darkness, to remove that which is causing the darkness."

Thus, the essence of the guru is to remove the ignorance that is the cause of bondage, sorrow and suffering. And the essence of the disciple is a keen eagerness, a great desire, to be free from ignorance, to get rid of this layer of ignorance and attain illumination. Unless there is this willingness, this deep eagerness to attain illumination, then the disciple is no disciple. A hundred gurus cannot help unless the disciple has a great desire for liberation and is seeking to get rid of that which stands in the way.

Ultimately, the innermost quintessence of real tyaga is renunciation of oneself, the renunciation of one's very identity, because that is the quintessence of ignorance. Maya abides in the jivatma as ahamkara (ego). The svarupa of avidya is ahamkara. The essential nature of ignorance is ego, considering oneself to be the body. Therefore, the essence of discipleship is the willingness to die to one's human

personality and identify oneself with one's *nija svarupa*, one's own true nature, to give up what constitutes the ignorance within one. If one clings to it, the guru may be a *sad-guru* or he may be *sakshat bhagavan*, but he will not be able to do anything.

So, the essence of the principle of the guru is the removal of the darkness of the disciple. The essence of discipleship is the desire for this removal. When these two meet, it clicks. The disciple should be hankering, eager, yearning to get rid of this darkness in the form of ego. Thus the disciple approaches the guru seeking the necessary *kripa* and instructions to achieve the removal of this false ego-principle.

If something has fallen into our eye and we cannot see, we go to someone and say: "Please, see what is in my eye and kindly remove it." If a person is suffering great pain and requires surgery to remove some obstruction, he seeks help. The surgeon does not seek him out, because the surgeon is quite all right. It is the sufferer who wants to get rid of suffering. So, one who wishes to get rid of pain searches and finds one who is capable of removing the pain and submits himself to this removal.

So, there must be a keen desire for liberation and the willingness to submit oneself for the removal of that which stands in the way. If that is present, then this removal becomes possible. If it is not there, not all the *sad-gurus* in the world can help you. This is the spiritual situation. This is the spiritual situation between the *jivatma* in bondage and within *maya* and a *sad-guru* who can help him come out of his bondage. This is the crucial point of spiritual life and all guru-disciple relationships.

"Take everything, but not my ego." If the disciple says this the guru replies: "Sorry sir, that is the one thing that has

to be taken. God has brought me into your life only to do that work. All other things are only superficial. They are only frills, fringe benefits. The main thing is this: Darkness has to be removed by bringing in light. You have to submit yourself." So, deeply the essence of discipleship should exist in the disciple's consciousness, in the disciple's heart, mind and intellect.

This is to be deeply reflected upon. The crucial, central thing in the spiritual life, in the life of the spiritual seeker and his coming into relationship with a guru is one's desire to get rid of oneself, the desire to transcend oneself. That should be there. There should be a keen grasp of the essence of the spiritual process, be it *Vedanta* or *raja yoga* or *bhakti yoga* or *karma yoga*. One should have a deep, correct understanding. Gurudev himself was an outstanding example of this *sadhana* of the annihilation of the ego.

One must grasp this simple fact that the ego is our enemy; it is our problem. It actually constitutes our *samsara*, our *bandhana* (bondage). We should not fall in love with it and want to maintain and pamper it. If you keep it safe, then forget about liberation or peace of mind or happiness. Forget about it. Keep your ego; carefully nourish it, nurture it, protect it, take care of it. But forget about everything divine, everything spiritual, everything worth having. You will be left with what you want, what you are. Unwilling to forgo your ego, you will be left with that only; and possessing it, you will be the poorer.

You cannot keep the ego and attain God. They are like the South Pole and the North Pole. This is the truth. This has to be grasped; this has to be understood. And, with a subtle *buddhi*, *vichara* and *viveka*, one should be able to grasp this central fact about the spiritual life and take action in the light of this understanding.

God grant you that inner intuition and understanding.

Gurudev help you to be a true disciple, for life is short. Time is fleeting - days, weeks, months, years flow away. We cannot take it easy. Be earnest, be sincere and be correct in your apprehension of what is spiritual life, what is yoga.

Guru and disciple

For the sake of the Goal, a disciple must be willing to give up everything petty, and most important of all, be willing to give oneself up, to renounce one's little self, to renounce the very reality of one's temporary, earthly being. "Whoever clings to his life shall lose it, and whoever loses his life shall save it." "Kill this little 'I'. Die to live. Lead the divine life."

Therefore our ancients have said: "This can be attained through discipleship. Go to a Guru, sit at his feet and ask for his knowledge." The Guru says: "Yes, I am here to remove the ignorance that is your bondage and give you knowledge."

Thus the essence of the Guru is to remove the ignorance that is the cause of bondage, sorrow and suffering. And the essence of the disciple is a keen eagerness, a great desire to be free from ignorance-the essential nature of which is ego-and attain illumination. Unless there is this willingness, this deep eagerness to attain illumination, then the disciple is no disciple. A hundred Gurus cannot help unless the disciple has a great desire for liberation and is seeking to get rid of that which stands in the way.

HOW TO RECEIVE GURU'S GRACE

We have been told by our scriptures that guru kripa is a wonderful, mysterious factor that will enable the aspirants to seek and to attain the summum bonum of life, Self-realisation, darshan of God, or moksha. Whether the disciple does sadhana or not, whether one is deserving or undeserving, guru kripa sets aside all normal laws that operate in the spiritual plane and takes one to transcendental bliss. If we are to believe the scriptures, we should say that there is nothing except guru kripa needed for us to attain perfection in life.

If it is also true that the Guru is an infinite ocean of mercy, that his kripa ever showers upon all seekers whether they are worthy or unworthy, whether they are qualified or not, then by this time we should all be apta-kamas, full of Bliss. Is that so? No. We find very much to our vexation that we are caught up; ignorance is there; illusion is there; we are deceived at every turn by our own lower self.

Wherein lies the defect? If both the above statements are true and yet disciples are still verymuch earthbound, something else must be wrong. What is that something else? We don't have the temerity to say that the scriptures are untrue. At the same time, we do not assert that the Guru is not compassionate, that the Guru does not shower his kripa upon us. consideration. Guru kripa is undeniably a divine force that can turn even a stone into the infinite satchidananda, let alone a conscious being. There is absolutely not the least bit of exaggeration in the statement and the fact that the Guru is always gracious. But then, guru kripa has not only to be bestowed, not only to be given, but it has also to be received. In receiving it, we immortalize ourselves, divinise ourselves.

Unlimited charity may be bestowed by a generous-

hearted donor who calls upon all who are in need to come and take. But not all the wealth of the world will be of any avail to an indigent one if he will not avail himself of this great opportunity and become a receiver. And therefore it is that the great Lord Jesus said: "Seek and it shall be found; knock and it shall open unto you; ask and it shall be given." It is not as though there is any dearth of divine munificence, divine grace or guru Kripa Light is not lacking, but then there is a Law that we have to ask, we have to seek and we have to knock, and having done it we must be ready to receive. If this is present, then guru kripa works all wonders; it will flow into us and raise us to the highest realm of immortality, eternal light and infinite bliss.

But then, how can we receive it? How should we conduct ourselves if we are to be ready to receive this grace? By discipleship. For, the question of Guru and guru kripa arises only for the disciple. For those who are not of the category named disciple, it is said that mercy, compassion, grace and ashirvad will be given, but not guru kripa. When I say guru kripa, it is something special, something mysterious, something that bestows not anything merely of this earth, but gives the highest thing which human life is here for. A devotee may get the blessings of a saint, the grace of a saint. He may also be blessed and partake of the power of his compassion; but, for the attainment of the gift of guru kripa, we have first to be disciples.

How is it that one may be a disciple? It is not the Guru that accepts the disciple, but the disciple has to first accept the Guru. The disciple first of all has to render himself a sishya. Then he becomes deserving of and a rightful claimant to guru kripa. It is immaterial whether the Guru says "Yes, you are my sishya" or not.

Inasmuch as guru kripa takes us to the highest state, discipleship is qualifying ourselves to attain that highest state or the realisation of ourselves as satchidananda. Therefore, first of all, we have to feel that our present state as jiva-spirit enmeshed in a very agonising cage of flesh and bone-is something which is not part of our real nature, is something undesirable, something which we have to get rid of so that then we shall have peace and happiness.

Let us reflect and analyse: how many of us have got this feeling? How many sincerely wish to break out of this cage? If we have this feeling, then we are trying to grow into discipleship. Then we can approach the Freed One, for the Guru is the Freed One and one capable of freeing also. Then we can approach this Freed One and pray to him: "Oh, free us from this body." This prayer may not be expressed or articulated; but it must be recited from the innermost core of our being every moment of our life. Then alone can we expect guru kripa. If this pain and agony are not there, it is worthwhile trying to generate them. But such is the covering veil of dark maya that we are perfectly satisfied with our position.

To feel the necessity of mukti, Freedom, Divine Consciousness, of the higher Spiritual Life, we should resort to satsang, to study of scriptures; and we should paint vividly before our mental eye the wretchedness of human life on earth. These things will generate mumukshutva (desire for liberation). Mumukshutva is the first step if we have even to think of guru kripa.

Then we have to serve the Guru. Service is that mysterious something which pulls down the barrier that stands between us and the influence of guru kripa. Ego is the greatest barrier. Our old self-conceit and preconceived notions form a formidable second barrier. For all of this, service is the effective barrier-breaker.

What is the service of the Guru? Service of the Guru is to try our level best to carry out his upadesha, carry out the teachings of the Guru. Upon his sublime instructions we have to mould our life. We should also try to mould ourselves into that pattern of which he himself is a visible ideal. The secret of carrying out the instructions of the Guru to our humble best is a willing obedience in spirit. That is the most important thing. Readiness to bow completely down to the earth. Accept him as the leader and obey him. This obedience should be assiduously cultivated, for every aspect of our old nature, of our lower nature, our mental part, our indriyas, antahkarana, tries to see that we are prevented from developing this obedience in spirit; every time we move towards this attitude of obedience, the prompting will come from our old habit, from our preconceived notions: "Let us go the way in which we have been accustomed." This instinct of ages has to be overcome and broken down.

There must be joy in obedience to the Guru; and there should be a real craving in the spirit that "I should obey." To be a disciple you should obey even in dream; the idea of doing anything which is contrary to the spirit of the Guru's instructions should never arise in our consciousness. Day and night our sadhana should be to cultivate this attitude to perfection. If this is done, we are sufficiently on the way to qualify ourselves to receive guru kripa. This is the external part of the sadhana.

Inwardly we have also to break down the old set of ideas which somehow or other has crept into us regarding the Guru, his grace and its functions. It is a hard task, but it has to be done. Because, to the disciple, the nature of the Guru is not human. We should be completely blind to the human side of the Guru, and we should be conscious only of the divinity that he is. Then alone will we be able to partake of

this kripa which will transform us from the lower human into the transcendental divine. Our relationship with the Guru is purely divine, purely spiritual, and as long as we have not completely rubbed out the last vestige of human relationship with the Guru, we shall not be able to enter into the divine spiritual relationship with the Guru.

Being our Guru we expect that he should relieve us of small troubles, bodily ills, financial difficulties, domestic problems, little paltry matters of this earthly life. We will get all that if we pray to the Guru, but that is all that we will get. That mysterious lofty thing called guru kripa will not flow into us. Therefore, first of all we should try to efface all human relationships with the Guru. For that, subjectively we have to work out an inner transformation; until that is done, his divine nature will not become fully revealed to us. As long as we consider ourselves to be human beings, earthly beings, with all the wants, limitations and weaknesses of earthly beings, we cannot fully enter into the awareness of the Guru in his absolute, divine essence. Therefore, our sadhana should be to generate divine consciousness and shed our human consciousness. If we begin to live here as divine beings with a divine destiny, then gradually the guru kripa and the divine aspect of the Guru will begin to manifest, and we shall begin to partake of the guru kripa.

We have to make the start. From the very beginning to the very climax, all has to be got from the divine source. Until we make ourselves fit and generate the divine consciousness that we are not human beings, but we are souls in bondage-who only need a little transforming touch of guru kripa-we will not be able to fully make use of the Guru as the divine being.

To illustrate this point: A prince, who has lost his heritage and does not know that he is a prince, happens, in

his wanderings, to stand before his father's palace, being cowed down in the consciousness of a beggar. What is the maximum he will ask? He will ask: "Give me shelter for the night; give me food for the day." And that is what he will get. Supposing this very prince is made to realise: you are the heir to the kingdom. Then he will demand the whole kingdom. He will not demand food and shelter only.

Similarly, we have first of all to develop in us the consciousness that we are immortal beings, we are in essence satchidananda. Then we can demand that satchidananda consciousness from the Guru and the Guru will be able to give.

Finally, we have to take into consideration one more factor. Even if someone were to tell the prince that he is a prince, and he is to go to his father and demand the heritage, perhaps he is a minor. The king may say: "All right, give him a palace, and he will become entitled to his heritage, the kingdom, when he attains majority." Even so, there may be certain inner qualifications which are necessary for the full and effective reception of divine grace; until they are attained by the disciple, he will have to wait. Therefore, even after having seemingly attained all the qualifications of the ideal disciple, we have to wait in humility and in patience. We cannot arrogate to ourselves a perfection which is only visible to the discerning vision of a divine sight. Patience and humility in the spiritual realm may have to extend over a period of decades. We have to wait like a dog at the doorstep of the Guru for a whole lifetime if need be. There is no loss here, for the goal is immortal life, freedom.

If we have become willing servants and willing, obedient disciples, then it is the natural law that guru kripa will flow into us unasked. But, let us not commit the mistake of dictating to the Guru how his kripa should flow into us. For we

have within ourselves desires, our own ideas of what is good and bad, what is pleasant and unpleasant, desirable and undesirable; and we want guru kripa to conveniently adjust and adapt itself to our needs and fancies. Guru kripa may come in an unpleasant form. It may come in the form of a series of disappointments. We may think that the Guru has not bestowed his kripa upon us; but that disappointment itself will be his kripa. Many things may be seemingly good and pleasant, but it may be hurtful to our spirit, and that the Guru alone can perceive and judge. As a fond, careful mother, he may deny us that desire. But it will be the greatest manifestation of guru kripa, meant to remove all the obstacles and dangers that are in our path, and to take us nearer and nearer to the consciousness of satchidananda. We are not fit to judge whether we are ready to receive guru kripa or not and what form it should take.

The best thing is to humbly leave everything to the Guru: "I do not know whether I am a disciple or not. Therefore, O Ocean of Mercy and Compassion, pray make me a proper disciple. Generate in me that mumukshutva that makes me a disciple, and give me the spirit of willing obedience. Help me in trying to follow thy instructions. Help me in trying to mould myself upon the pattern set up by thee." This must be our constant prayer. And by this alone shall we be able to draw the kripa of our Guru and make our life fruitful. And the perfect way of praying is trying our best to be a real disciple.

OBEDIENCE IS BETTER THAN REVERENCE

The ancient, illumined seers and sages of this sacred land of India have declared that your supreme goal of life, the purpose of your existence, is to attain liberation-liberation vexing bondage and limitation of this earth-bound and body-bound life. They have called it moksha. And to attain it they said that you have to exert, you have to be up and doing, you have to make the necessary effort.

So, they have linked that supreme attainment, by which alone your life becomes fruitful and fulfilled, to exertion. You must exert! That is their call to each and every one of you. You must exert, you must do purushartha. If exertion, therefore, is the means, if abhyasa is the means, if sadhana is the means for attaining that supreme state, then it implies that we cannot keep quiet. As the saying goes, we must do the needful.

And what that needful is, is the content of all the scriptures and of all the teachings of the saints and sages. They describe the various means: how you can do it through your emotion, through your sentiment; how you can do it through your mind power, through your intelligence, intellect, discrimination, investigation and enquiry; how you can do it through the physical activity of your body; how you can do it through Name; how you can do it through a combination of all-diverse ways. All the scriptures, the sastras, tell us the various methods. But they all say that YOU must do it. And you can attain only by EXERTION.

There is butter inside milk, but unless you put forth the necessary effort and churn it, the milk will remain milk only. The butter will never be obtained. It is only when you make the necessary exertion that the butter appears, it comes out at the top and you are able to obtain it. That is the admonition.

And at the same time that you do the needful—you do *purushartha*, you do *abhyasa*—you must refrain from doing that which is inimical or adverse to the success of your activity. If you want to succeed in what you do, if you want your exertion to be fruitful, you must simultaneously see that you do not do those things that will stand as an obstacle to the success of your endeavour.

You cannot treat yourself for a stomach ulcer and at the same time continue to take alcoholic liquor. You cannot treat yourself for diabetes and at the same time go on stuffing yourself with sweets. You cannot treat yourself for tuberculosis and at the same time continue to smoke. Because all these things successfully nullify whatever effort you are doing on the positive side for gaining some desired objective. They make the effort useless.

Some of our ancients—who were filled with a desire for attaining supreme wisdom, to become divinely perfected beings, who wholeheartedly dedicated themselves to this quest—went away to the forest, lived in seclusion, practised severe austerities, lived on leaves and water, took nothing that would be likely to stimulate their passions; if such people could have a spiritual downfall when a temptation suddenly arose, then what about those who eat all sorts of rich food, have soft beds and nice pillows with all comforts and conveniences, no austerity, no tapasya, no penance, no mortification, no self-denial, no fasting, no prayer, no vigil? Then how do you expect such people—calling themselves sadhakas, living lives of sense-satisfaction, desire-fulfilment, good food, comfort and convenience—not to have a downfall? How can you expect such people to attain illumination?

If, in spite of what has been said, such people—well fed, well clothed, full of comfort and conveniences and luxuries—attain Self-realisation, then the Himalayan mountains will float

upon the Indian Ocean. That is what an ancient Sanskrit sloka says. People like Visvamitra and Parasara sustained their penance and their prayerful life of meditation in the forest upon merely air and water and the leaves of trees. If such people had a downfall when they were tempted, do you think that people who live a life of comfort, convenience and good food will attain Self-realisation? If they attain, wonder of wonder, nothing is impossible. Everything is possible. Fire will start burning downwards. The sun will start rising in the west and setting in the east. The Ganga will start flowing towards the Himalayas, and if a mountain is thrown into the ocean, it will merrily start floating away. That is what this sloka says.

Which all goes to say, that simultaneous with one's effort or exertion or *purushartha* or *abhyasa* or *sadhana* for the attainment of this great liberation, one should at the same time, side by side, also practise self-restraint, self-control, moderation. That is what the scriptures tell us. They speak of do's and don'ts.

Patanjali starts with that. He gives us *yamas* and *niyamas*. He says: *ahimsa*—do not hurt anyone. *Brahmacharya*—do not indulge in gross, lower propensities. Be noble, be subtle, rise high into sattva. *Satyam*—speak the truth. It also means do not speak falsehood. You cannot just speak the truth when it is convenient to you, and say I am fulfilling the injunctions of Patanjali's *yoga sutra*. When he says speak the truth, it means truth and truth alone. It cannot be accompanied by falsehoods when they are convenient for you. You cannot play a game of being this and that.

This is the implication in Jesus saying to the fishermen: "Arise, follow Me." A very simple sentence, but it is filled with a world of meaning: "Arise, come, come! Stop being as you are! Put an end to this state! Change it! Be transformed! Arise! Come out of it! Now I will tell you: Be something else. Follow

Me. Be as I am. Do as I am. I stand before you as an example. Walk in My footsteps. Live as I am living. Follow Me. I am teaching you how to live. Don't follow your whims and fancies. Follow Me."

Long before this significant and most meaningful incident for all humanity, long before that, another teacher also wanted His disciple to do as He told him to, to act as He told him to act. And the disciple replied: "karishye vachanam tava-Yes, I shall do Thy bidding, I shall carry out Thy word, Thy injunction." And that being in whose presence we are discussing these facts, these truths, that being is the one who said: "Obedience is better than reverence."

So when Jesus says, "Arise and follow Me," we must consider: Are we arising from that which we have been? Are we following? What is that righteous way that leads to the Kingdom of Heaven? It is that way which has been trodden by all the great ones of the past-mahajana *yena gatah sa panthah*. Are you following? Are you fulfilling this injunction? Then this is the day. This then is the truth you must deeply reflect upon.

If worship is to be fruitful, if devotion is to be fruitful, if reverence is to be fruitful, if adoration and prayer is to be fruitful, it must be accompanied by obedience. It must be accompanied by carrying out the word of the guru. Are we doing it or not?

Gurudev says: "At the end of each day before you go to bed, examine yourself, introspect, think deeply, go within, search, do self-examination." He says to do this every day. Also, keep a spiritual diary, keep a self-correction register. He uses the term self-correction. *Uddharet atmanatmanam*—each one must uplift oneself by one's own self. Therefore, you have to correct yourself by your own self. Someone may point out a defect to you, but that person cannot correct the

defect in you. You have to make effort and correct yourself. And at the end of his Twenty Important Spiritual Instructions, Gurudev says: "This is the essence of all spiritual *sadhanas*. This will lead you to *moksha*. All these niyamas or spiritual cannons must be rigidly observed. You must not give leniency to the mind."

If you do not observe Gurudev's instructions strictly and rigidly and if you find that no spiritual progress is being made, that you have no peace of mind, that the same old rubbish is there as before, then you can't blame the Ganga or the Himalayas or Rishikesh. You cannot blame this holy atmosphere of the forest laden with bilva trees. You cannot blame Lord Visvanatha or the Divine Name being chanted in the Bhajan Hall. You cannot blame the Samadhi Shrine or the Library filled with spiritual books.

Then, who is to blame? You need not blame yourself either. You must blame your disobedience. You are blameless because you are Atman-aham brahmasic. So, if you do not want to blame yourself, blame your sins of omission and commission. And then stop doing sins of commission and start correcting your sins of omission. Someone has to take the blame. Somewhere there is a cause. If walking is painful that means that the shoe is pinching or you have a thorn in your foot. Without a cause you won't have an effect. Find out!

If, in spite of all these wonderful, sublime teachings and this wonderful atmosphere, we find that we are not making spiritual progress, this much is for sure: this holy environment is not responsible for it. And no use saying that Krishna is responsible, Jesus is responsible, Chidananda is responsible. First of all look at your own life.

"Arise and follow Me." Are you following the great ones? *Karishye vachanam tava*—O Lord I will carry out Thy word, I will do Thy bidding. "Obedience is better than

reverence," says Gurudev, "Do real *sadhana*, my dear children, do real *sadhana*. How can you expect real peace of mind if you do not do *brahma vichara*? How can you expect real santi if you do not do *yoga sadhana*?"

So, today, my beloved *sadhakas*, devotees of the Lord, lovers of righteousness, *satsangis*, realise that success or failure is something whose source you have to trace into your own inner being, into your own *svabhava*, your own nature and life and the manner in which you live your life—your conduct, your character, your action—your day-to-day living of your life. You will have to trace it there.

You will not find the reason for the lack of spiritual progress anywhere else in the world. You have to seek within. Ponder. Reflect. Analyse. Be humble. Be simple. Be honest with yourself. Be truthful. Be sincere. Be earnest. Be serious. Be true.

Today is the right day, the right time to tell Swami Sivanandaji: "Yes, Holy Master, just as I show reverence to you, I shall also obey you, I shall actively follow your spiritual instructions and teachings. I will do all that is necessary to be done. I will avoid all that should not be done. Thus will I be a good disciple, a perfect yogi, a true *sadhaka* and then I shall rejoice and rejoice and I shall rejoice!"

Guru Bhakti and Guru seva

Guru bhakti and guru seva are important factors in spiritual life. Guru bhakti is devotion to the Guru. It helps to free the disciple from earthly attachments to other worldly things and beings. Guru seva or service of the Guru when properly done is effective in removing selfishness, laziness and cravings for comfort in spiritual sadhakas. True guru bhakti is in obeying and following the upadesha and instructions of your Guru. Real guru seva is to live your life and conduct yourself in such a manner that your life and personal vyavahara bring a good name to the Guru. It raises the Guru's reputation to higher heights and makes your Guru enshrined forever in the memory of all men. The best guru dakshina that can be offered to any Guru is a life lived in accordance with the Guru's teachings. A tree is known by its fruits. A flower is known through its fragrance. A country is known by its citizens. A father is known by the nature and behaviour of his son. A teacher is known by his students. This is the popular belief in human society. Hence, the devotees and disciples of any holy person must try their utmost best to make themselves the embodiment of that holy person's teachings and reflect guru upadesha in their own day-to-day life.

- Swami Chidananda

GURU - BHAKTI

God is an unknown entity. God is an unseen entity. However, with absolutely irrefutable logic, rational argument and reason, Vedanta establishes the fact of God. And through analysis we can infer, .Yes, there must be a God; it stands to reason. It is irrational to suppose that there cannot be such a thing as God. There must be.. And scriptures also tell us that He is a Being who is sacred, who is holy, all-pure, noble and sublime. But, nevertheless, God is still for us only a concept of the mind. We have not seen God. We have not touched, nor tasted, nor smelt Him. We have only heard about Him. We can only infer Him. We can only imagine Him.

But then, if we are able to see in a human individual manifestations of holiness, of sanctity, of purity, of sublimity, of nobility, of goodness, of loftiness of conduct, character, nature, sentiment, thought, feeling and action, if we see something out of the ordinary - something extraordinary, something special, a manifestation of those qualities that we have been taught to associate only with God - then we say: "If such a human being can exist, God must exist. Otherwise, from whence do these qualities come which we do not normally see in anyone?" When we see this divinity, this holiness, this sanctity, we begin to realise: "Yes, God I have not seen, but godliness I have seen. All the qualities attributed to God by the scriptures, by saints and sages, in all religious contexts - those I see in an unusual measure, in an extraordinary measure, in this being. Because I have seen this being and this being is known to me, I am assured that God is. I know there must be a God." And in the Vedic tradition the guru is such a being. The guru becomes for us *pratyaksha devata*, visible God. God reveals Himself through the guru.

The guru thus becomes the linking factor, a channel

for putting the wandering, lost *jivatma*, the individual Soul, back into contact with its source, God, the Universal Soul. And just as the guru is a channel for the *jivatma* to re-link itself with the *paramatma*, even so, if we can create a channel between ourselves and our *guru*, then that channel will become the effecting means of receiving from the *guru guru-kripa*, all that the guru is - the knowledge of the *guru*, the sanctity of the *guru*, the purity of the *guru*, the spirituality of the *guru*.

And that channel is called *guru-bhakti*. That is why the significant verse in the Svetasvatara Upanishad: "yasya deve para bhaktih yatha deve tatha gurau, tasyaite kathita hyarthah prakasante mahatmanah - If you have supreme devotion to God and the same kind of devotion to your guru, then to you, the essence, the subtle truths of the scriptures become revealed." Thus it is that through *guru-bhakti* the sadhaka, the seeker, the disciple, creates an effective link, a connection, a channel which enables the guru to share with the disciple what the guru has been endowed with from God.

So, we have to provide a way for the *guru* to give what he wishes to give. And that is through *guru-bhakti*, devotion, where there is no place for the ego. If the thought comes, "I have got great *guru-bhakti*," then finished, that *bhakti* becomes cancelled, it is nullified. You yourself must become the very embodiment of that love, that devotion. There should be no awareness of some being, some person having that quality of devotion. Then it becomes a subtle spiritual ego. The very purpose of the existence of the guru is to remove the separatist I-consciousness, the consciousness of being a separate being or entity, and if *guru-bhakti* becomes a means of boosting and sustaining that *abhimana* (ego), *ahamkara* (egoism), then it loses its purpose and becomes self-defeating.

Thus true *guru-bhakti* is egoless, *nirabhiman* (without

ego), *vinamra* (humble). Sabari was *bhaktisvarupa*. She had great *bhakti* for Rama, but she was not conscious that she was a great devotee of Rama. Neither was Hanuman conscious that he was a great *bhakta* of Rama. It was his very nature. He was an embodiment of devotion for Rama. The *gopis* of Vrindavan did not know that they were great devotees of Krishna. They said: "All we know is that He is the one object to be adored. We do not know anything else. We cannot do anything but adore Him. We are that adoration. It is our very self. We are not different from that. Take it away from us and we will die, we will cease to exist." They were filled with that love, not with egoistical awareness of that love.

The greater the growth of devotion and the greater the reverence for the *guru*, the greater is the inflow of the *guru's* grace. The greater the desire to carry out the ideals and principles of the *guru* in life and the greater the keen eagerness and firm determination to carry out the instructions of the *guru* faithfully, meticulously, day after day, in one's daily activities and life, the greater is the inflow of the *guru's* grace. Gurudev was never tired of again and again reiterating: "Obedience is better than reverence." And Vivekananda came down heavily upon mere sentiment and emotion. He said that this sentiment has ruined us. We have become backboneless; we lack a sense of purpose.

And what have the Upanishads put before us to illustrate true devotion? One disciple came to his *guru* as a young boy and the *guru* told him that it was his duty to collect firewood daily for the haven. He went on doing it without questioning. He was not allowed to cut green trees; and so the whole day, with great difficulty, he searched for and cut dry wood, put it on his head and returned only in the evening. The *guru* never gave him any spiritual instructions or teachings. Years went by. The disciple forgot time, until one

day he realised he had become old, his hair and beard had become silver-white. Suddenly he burst into tears: "What is my fate? My whole life has passed away and the guru has not yet given me *brahma-jnana*." He had become old. He had served his guru without question ever since he was a young boy. That was his devotion.

Another disciple was asked to take the *guru's* cattle to pasture. He had to be with the cattle all day. The guru did not ask his wife to prepare any lunch for him, and he did not have permission to drink milk from the cows. So the whole day he went hungry, only quenching his thirst with water. Days, months, years passed this way.

And one disciple was asked to irrigate the *guru's* fields. He had to let the water into the fields and make sure that it did not leak out. After working the whole day, one evening he discovered a leak in one of the earthen walls. He tried to plug it with some clay. It kept leaking. He tried all methods to repair it, and finally not knowing what else to do, he decided to plug it with his own body. So he lay down, curled himself into a ball and stopped the leak. After nightfall, when he had not returned, the guru became anxious and so with several of his disciples went searching for him. Finally they found him in his curled up position stopping the leak.

That was the type of *guru-bhakti* they had. It was not mere sentiment. It was true *guru-bhakti*. It had iron behind it. It had immense strength behind it. It had determination, *sattvic* determination, behind it. These are a few towering examples of *guru-bhakti* in our scriptures. There are many others. They come from all traditions. They are all *sanketa matra* (indicators) of the stuff that *guru-bhakti* is made of. It is divine power, it is divine force, not merely silly human sentiment, not merely emotion.

When such *guru-bhakti* is there towards the *guru*, such

obedience, such great desire to carry out his behest, biddings and teachings, then illumination automatically descends from the *guru* to the disciple. The illumination in which the *guru* is established comes like a spark flying from one end of an exposed wire to another. For when the weeping old disciple was taken by the *guru's* wife to the *guru* and explained why he was weeping, the *guru* replied: "What! What do you mean, you have no illumination!" Immediately, the disciple became illumined. Why? Because of his total self-effacement, total dedication, his unquestioning carrying out of the behest of the *guru*, because of the exemplary type of devotion that filled his heart: "I have come to a *guru*. I must serve him. This is my greatest good fortune."

Thus the most effective way of deriving maximum benefit from the *guru* is to create a channel of lofty, sublime devotion to the *guru*, heroic *guru-bhakti*. And it is that heroic *guru-bhakti* where there is the greatest love and reverence combined with the highest obedience, the highest desire to please the *guru* by carrying out his instructions, that becomes the great channel for the inflow of *guru-kripa*. In that way, spiritual vision dawns and you "see" Reality, you "behold" Reality.

That is the tradition. That is the true inner dynamics of the *guru sishya* relationship through which the disciple is able to benefit in a maximum measure from the *guru*. Thus we have known from our scriptures, from our ancient *bhaktas*, from the narratives of ancient disciples, their relationship to their *gurus*. Thus we have learnt this great secret. May we all be benefited.

May the grace of all the *brahma-vidya-gurus*, from ancient times up to the present, be upon you. May you ponder deeply, reflect deeply, upon what an ideal disciple should be, what constitutes real discipleship, and become benefited thereby.

GURU SISHYA YOGA

It is through developing proximity to Reality and then contact with Reality, that one ultimately becomes Reality. It is only through *sparsa* (touch), it is only through contact, that a philosopher's stone is able to turn iron into gold. If you keep it a hair's-breadth away, the iron will forever remain iron. No matter how powerful the philosopher's stone is, it cannot exercise its power unless the base metal comes into actual contact with it.

This lets us into a great truth: It is in developing a living contact with a source of transforming spiritual power that one becomes illumined, one becomes divine, one becomes transformed. Thus, the way to derive maximum benefit from our guru is by connecting ourselves to him. We do it through faith, *sraddha*. We do it through supreme devotion, *parabhakti*.

Is there an additional method of contacting the guru? Yes, and one that was constantly, repeatedly reiterated by Gurudev. Gurudev said: "Obedience is better than reverence." Devotion is good. But what is the sign of devotion? What is the practical proof that you are really devoted to the guru? It is to be sincerely, earnestly and seriously desirous of carrying out his instructions and living according to his teachings.

To walk along the path that the guru has made for us and to go in the direction he has pointed out is the sign of true love and devotion. That is *bhakti*. *Bhakti* also means *seva*. *Bhakti* means serving the *guru*. And what is the greatest service that one can render to the *guru*? Try to be like him. Try to do exactly what he has asked you to do. For this effects an even deeper contact and connection. When you are living the teachings of the *guru*, you are in the deepest contact with the *guru*, you are in the deepest state of *yoga* with the *guru*.

Guru sishya yoga is present in its highest and most intense form when the disciple makes himself the very embodiment of the teachings of the *guru*, the very personification of the *guru upadesa* (instructions), the *guru ajna* (orders) and the *guru adesa* (commands). That is why Sanjaya was able to utter the concluding *sloka* of the Srimad Bhagavad Gita - *yatra yogesvarah krishnao yatra partho dhanur-dharah; tatra srir-vijayo bhutir-dhruva nitir-matir-mama* (Wherever is Krishna, the Lord of yoga, and Arjuna, the ideal disciple, there are prosperity, victory, happiness and firm policy - such is my conviction). When the full carrying out of the *ajna*, *upadesa* and *adesa* of the *guru* is present, everything is wonderful, everything is auspicious, everything is blessed. It is certain fulfilment and victory. Everything is certain when this type of *yoga* between the *sishya* and the *guru* is there.

This inner fact is a very important truth that is revealed in the Gita. For in the beginning, Arjuna is the very contrary of a *sishya*. He says: "I will not fight." At the outset, he even questions the correctness of the *guru*'s teachings, because he is in a state of ignorance. He is in a state of delusion. He is in a state of deep attachment, completely entangled by himself, in himself. He is a slave of himself. He is entangled by his own emotions, his own sentiments, his own desires, his own whims and fancies, his own attachment and *bhranti* (delusion). But very quickly he is made to realise his folly. In the second chapter he says: "*sishyas-te'ham sadhi mam tvam prapannam* - I am Your disciple. I have taken refuge in Thee. Please teach me. Please guide me. Please enlighten me. Please lead me; otherwise I am lost." Thus he appeals to the *guru*.

Now, there itself is the first transformation. Arjuna gives up his own self-assertive state of saying "I am right," and he is able to recognise his delusion. He does not rebel when it is pointed out by the Master: "What has happened to you? What

is this type of *moha* (delusion), this *kasmalam* (dejection) in which you are caught? Are you not ashamed? Stand up! Stop this!" When he was chastised, immediately it worked. He realised: "I am doing something very foolish, something wrong." And so he says: "I am sorry. I was not myself. I take shelter at Your feet. Please instruct me."

Thus, from then onwards, there is established this connection where he is eager to receive, wants to be guided, wants to be taught and is willing to listen. And his earnestness and sincerity are brought out by the questions he asks: "Please, this is not clear to me. You say this, You say that. I am confused. Kindly, out of mercy, compassion, make this clearer to me." He wants every doubt cleared. He is a *jijnasu* (seeker of Truth). Right from the start he keeps on asking, and Krishna keeps on giving.

So you must see that the Gita teachings commence when the *guru sishya* relationship has been voluntarily undertaken and fully expressed: "I am Your disciple. I take shelter at Your feet. Remove this delusion. Tell me what is good for me." And at the culmination, when their *samparka* (contact) becomes fruitful in absolute discipleship, we have the grand last verse. What is the fruit of such discipleship, this type of yoga, *guru sishya* yoga, this inner connection between the seeking soul and the illuminating, liberating master? The glory of it is brought out in the last verse of the Gita. If there is such obedience, if there is such oneness, *samparka*, then all auspiciousness and blessedness, all plenty, prosperity and victory become assured.

Therefore, by the grace of the Lord and the blessings of Gurudev, we have been able to ponder this important aspect of the *guru sishya* relationship. We see that the greater the *samyoga* (contact), the greater is the illumination and benefit to the disciple and the greater is the ability of the guru

to go on sharing, giving and transferring. - "Yes, whatever I have is yours. Come, take it." This is possible only if this *samparka* (contact) is there.

The great *samparka* is *bhakti, parabhakti*. A further *samparka* is constant living in the spirit of the *guru*'s teachings, the constant carrying out of his instructions, fulfilling all his *ajnas*, making oneself the embodiment of *guru upadesa* and *guru adesa*. This becomes the deepest connection, heart connection, innermost connection between the *sishya* and the *guru*. The *sishya* becomes the embodiment of the *guru*'s teachings. He strives earnestly and diligently to make himself the very personification of *guru upadesa* and *guru adesa*. This is the greatest blessedness. This is the essence of discipleship. What is *sishyatva* (disciplehood)? It is making oneself the very *pratikam* (image) of the *guru ajna, guru upadesa* and *guru adesa*.

TRUE DISCIPLESHIP

If Gurudev means anything at all to a sincere seeking soul, that meaning is to make our life divine. If he means anything at all, it is a divine life. His presence here is to inspire us, to touch and awaken our dormant Divinity - by his glance of grace to awaken us to our own awareness, to awaken from within us our reality which is Divinity.

This is a centre for removing the veil across our vision which hides the Divinity that pervades everywhere and is ever present before us, for removing the inner veil that hides from our vision our own Divinity, for we are part of that all-pervading, infinite, eternal Cosmic Reality. Being parts of that infinite Cosmic Reality, we partake and share of Its essential nature in our own essential being.

We may be different in our non-essential appearances, but we are all one, identical, in our hidden true nature, our hidden, eternal, unchanging essential nature. We are the distilled quintessence of pure Divinity. We possess within us the ability to recognise this potential and to seriously, earnestly and sincerely struggle, strive and aspire to awaken the sleeping Divinity that we are. We have the potential to persevere in this attempt to continuously awaken and manifest that only and to refuse to manifest any lesser aspect of our non-essential outer self.

The outer self is made up of limiting adjuncts: the senses, the inner cognising faculties, the life-currents, life-principles, *pancha karma indriyas*, *pancha jnana indriyas*, *pancha pranas*, mind, intellect, ego-sense, memory, imagination, thought and sentiment. Refusing to identify yourself with and rejecting the demands for expression of these lesser, imperfect, passing aspects of your present

human personality; and being ever persisting, insisting and firmly determined to express only that which you are (to unfold, awaken, express and actively manifest only that part of you which is your reality, your eternal identity, that part of you which is one with the Cosmic Reality); to be insisting, always resolving, determining and persevering in the continuous attempt, in this unbroken practice of manifesting your Divinity - that is true discipleship to this invisible spiritual presence. That is the token of our reverence for this invisible spiritual reality.

That is the one and only way we can offer our genuine homage, our authentic recognition of his *gurutva*: "He is my guru; he is my spiritual teacher; I follow him." This is to be demonstrated by our persistent, persevering, continuous, unbroken attempt - again and again, and yet again - to make manifest our higher nature (our real nature, our essential divine nature, the God-principle within us which we are) and not anything else. This is leading the divine life. This is Yoga-Vedanta. This is the sadhana of Gurudev Swami Sivanandaji.

And to enable us to engage in this sadhana, his penance, his renunciation, his realisation has brought into being this outer, greater manifestation of his in the form of this holy ashram. He has brought into being this ashram to offer us a field for engaging in this essential Sivananda *sadhana*, Divine Life *sadhana*, to offer us varied facilities to manifest our Divinity.

If this ashram means to you this attempt to manifest your Divinity, to make use of each and every factor that could be a help in this inner process of expressing outwardly the Divinity that you are, then this ashram is verily deeply meaningful to you; this ashram has been understood by you. You are wise, you have vision. Otherwise, even if he has, by

the collyrium rod of knowledge, removed the obscuring cataract of ignorance and opened your eyes, yet you have closed them once again, refusing to see.

Ajnana timirandhasya jnananjana salakaya; chakshur unmilitam yena tasmai sri gurave namah (I prostrate to that Sri guru, who has opened with the collyrium stick of divine knowledge, the eyes of him who was rendered blind by the darkness of ignorance). They say that if there is intense eagerness to see and recognise the truth of things - the reality of the world, the universe, the environment, the setup in which we are living - then the task of the guru in restoring one's vision would become fruitful.

But if a delicate, a very delicate action has been performed and the veil that obscures your vision has been removed and your sight has been restored so that you can perceive and be benefited, if you then close your eyes, then the restored sight will not serve any purpose.

Therefore they say: "Arise, awake, open your eyes and live with vision!" Live recognizing the value of that which surrounds you; recognise the value of this here and now situation.the present situation in which God has blessed you to be. Then everything will become meaningful; everything will become invaluable; everything will help you to lead a truly divine life.to manifest in thought, word and action day after day, every moment, the Divinity that you are.

The sharing of today, therefore, brings to you what discipleship to this great, worshipful and beloved being must mean to each and every one of you who is in this ashram. This sharing is a call upon all of you to never forget the Divinity that you are, to ever live in this keen awareness, alert awareness, of the Divinity that you are, and to make this wonderful golden setup the means of unfolding that Divinity, of blessing yourself and blessing everything all around you, within and without - blessing,

by your Divinity, your surroundings, the ashram and every being that you come into contact with.

Thus, to manifest our discipleship to this being, the one key word is Divinity. The one key word to make your life authentic, genuine, effective, true - that key word is Divinity. The one word that sums up your relationship with worshipful Gurudev is Divinity. Divine you are; divine may your life be, divine your thoughts and feelings, divine your words and actions !

THE OFFERING THAT WILL DELIGHT THE GURU

Worshipful homage unto that supreme Divine Presence, the eternal, all-pervading, immanent Reality, that is the one unchanging, immutable and imperishable Being behind and beyond this everchanging, temporary and perishable phenomenal flux, this universe that we regard as real but that is a fleeting phenomenon of vanishing names and forms.

We salute that Reality which is hidden behind this outer appearance and supports it, even as the screen in a cinema theatre supports the fleeting shadows projected upon it. These shadows may seem to be very real, and they grip the audience who pay money to be deluded. But this fleeting shadow-play has a beginning and an end and is ever changing, while the screen forever remains the same. It was in the beginning, it is at the end and it continues to be the same, even when it is not seen by the audience who is lost in the projected shadows. To that great, immanent, all-pervading, everpresent Reality, worshipful homage!

Loving adorations to the spiritual presence of Gurudev Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj who makes us aware of our non-perception, who opens our inner eyes and makes us perceive the Reality. For that indeed is the great grace of the guru-to awaken us from the slumber of ignorance and make us perceive the hidden Reality in the midst of changing appearances. The guru is one who intensely desires the highest welfare, the supreme good of the sincere *sadhaka, jijnasu, mumukshu, yogi*.

Guru Purnima is the sacred full moon day in the year when all over India disciples tend to travel to be present at the place of their *guru, gurusthan*. They fulfil their desire to sit before the *guru*, to offer their reverence and to receive

from him a quickening impulse that will give them a fresh impetus in their journey beyond sorrow to the realm of eternal bliss, the realm of light beyond all darkness.

They also desire to show their reverence in a tangible manner, by making an offering as a symbol of their gratitude, their appreciation for what they have received from the *guru*. They call it *guru dakshina*, a special offering that they make to the *guru*. Now, what is the *guru dakshina* that is especially pleasing to the *guru* ?

Being sincere and earnest in *sadhana*, rededicating themselves to the great ideals of spirituality-renunciation, dispassion, discrimination, *abhyasa*, spiritual *sadhana*—that indeed would be the *guru dakshina* desired by the *guru*. That each disciple shines as a centre of fiery aspiration, intense fervour and total dedication to the ideal, and has a resolute determination to follow the path, to pursue the ideal come what may, to adhere to the *guru's* instructions, and to live by the lofty ideals placed before us by the ancient seers and sages of whom we are descendants—that would be the *dakshina* desired by the *guru*.

In this context we remember the ancient saying, "Physician, heal thyself." First and foremost start with your own good work. Where you are, within yourself, work for a renewal, work for a rebirth, work for the emergence of a new being within you—a new mind, a new heart, a new person within.

Guru Purnima, therefore, has this significance: it is an occasion for a renewal. There is a fabled bird, known as the phoenix, connected with the worship of the sun, especially in ancient Egypt. It is reputed that there is only one phoenix at a time and that it lives for at least five hundred years. To perpetuate itself, it does not build a nest to hatch an egg, but rather a nest made of aromatic boughs and spices as a funeral

pyre. It then sets the nest on fire and is consumed in the flames. It ceases to be, but lo, out of those ashes a shining new phoenix miraculously emerges.

This ancient belief about this bird is of deep significance to each and every spiritual aspirant. From out of the ashes of your old self-the unspiritual self, the self that is wedded to ignorance, to attachment to sense-objects and their indulgence, which is also desire-ridden and thinking of itself as an embodied physical personality with physical features and impulses-emerge as a shiny new being. Having annihilated the previous personality, destroying it totally, ceasing to be, recreate yourself and begin your work here. Gurudev used to say: "Kill this little T. Die to live. Lead the divine life." That indeed is the great *guru dakshina*, more precious than the nine gems, more precious than silver and gold. The *guru* would rejoice in such a *guru dakshina*.

Therefore deeply reflect upon this. Ponder this vital, very significant and important idea. Start with yourself. Become a new being, even as the phoenix. Shine with this renewal, and may that be your *guru dakshina*. God will be pleased; the *guru* will be delighted, and the whole brotherhood will be benefited. And you, above all, will be most benefited by your offering.

May God and *guru* inspire you to contemplate this in all seriousness and sincerity. In all earnestness ponder this, and do it!"

THE GREATEST GURU DAKSHINA

Today, Thursday, is the day of contemplating the Guru. Let us consider the question: What is the best reverence, what is the best worship, what is the best devotion, guru bhakti, and what is the best service, guru seva, that we can offer the Guru?

The best guru bhakti is to love all, to be kind and compassionate towards all and never hurt any living creature-to try as much as possible to benefit life around us, to be good, do good, and to serve, so that out of us only good comes, only help comes, only service comes, only usefulness. All that is positive, creative, constructive, auspicious, good, beautiful-that only should come to all life around us, all God's creation, through our thoughts, words and actions. Anything that is negative, anything that is destructive, harmful or injurious should never come.

Thus, there is no greater guru bhakti, there is no greater guru seva, there is no greater worship and adoration of the Guru than to become an embodiment of kindness, compassion and doing good to others. This is the greatest *guru dakshina* (gift to the Guru) also. This is the hallmark of discipleship. What is the greatest worship of the Guru, the greatest reverence we can offer, the greatest bhakti and seva? Truthfulness is the greatest *guru dakshina*, the greatest guru bhakti, the greatest guru seva. This is the second great way of worshipping and adoring the Guru. There is no greater way.

All that contradicts truth contradicts guru bhakti, contradicts your reverence to the Guru. Reverence becomes a parody, an anomaly; it turns into an empty nothingness if we do not live to uphold that which the great Gurus of all time stood for, that which they proclaimed. Truthfulness, therefore,

in all things, integrity, therefore, in all things is the highest guru bhakti, the highest guru dakshina, the highest guru seva.

What is the greatest guru seva, guru bhakti and dakshina? Control the self, conquer the mind and its desires and be established in concentration and inner meditation. There is no guru seva, no guru bhakti, no guru dakshina higher than this. This is the highest way of paying reverence to the Guru. Be a person of self-control. To be a person of self-control, who has mastered his mind, its desires, vagaries and fantasies, to be established in self-control, overcoming the mind and successfully centering it upon God—that is the greatest guru bhakti and dakshina. That is the greatest guru seva and it is true reverence to the Guru who is Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesvara.

Lord Siva has a trident. It is a weapon of destruction. He holds it and he wields it. Lord Vishnu has a discus. It is also a weapon of destruction. He holds it and wields it. Brahma has no weapon of destruction or harm. He is an embodiment of ahimsa, non-injury. He gives life, he creates life. He holds a kamandalu in one hand, a japa maala in another, the Veda in another, and he gives fearlessness with the other hand.

Therefore, Brahma is the creator of life and the embodiment of ahimsa. Lord Vishnu is Satyanarayana, truthfulness, and Lord Siva is ever self-absorbed, perfectly self-controlled, with mind and senses withdrawn and his entire interior plunged into a state of deep, deep meditation. These three—ahimsa, satya, brahmacharya—constitute the essential part of guru tattva, and to reflect that in our own personality, in our own life, character and conduct, is to shine like the full moon, absorbing the light that shines in the Guru, in the guru tattva and embodying it in ourselves, reflecting it in all its fullness, glory and immaculate grandness and greatness.

That is discipleship. That is the greatest guru seva;

that is the greatest guru bhakti; that is the greatest guru aradhana (worship); that is the greatest way we can pay our guru dakshina. To become an embodiment of compassion, kindness, truthfulness, perfect self-control and contemplation is the essence of discipleship. It is the essence of guru bhakti and seva.

May we contemplate these facts, these truths of our own individual personal spiritual life, and may we realise their truth and become blessed !

THE TRUE SPIRIT OF DISCIPLESHIP

Loving adorations to revered and beloved Holy Master Guru Maharaj Swami Sivanandaji in whose spiritual presence we are at this moment, and whose spiritual presence surrounds us from without as multifarious scopes for our spiritual evolution in our chosen field of spiritual sadhana! Whether it is selfless service, devotion and prayer, concentration and meditation, inner discipline in the form of japa and kirtan, or enquiry, discrimination, analysis and investigation through a keen, subtle intellect, sharpened by study and by listening to the same teachings, his spiritual presence draws us from all sides towards our highest blessedness, our greatest good, the supreme and successful fulfilment of our earth life.

That presence also prompts us from within to a life of goodness, prompts us, urges us, inspires us towards a life of truthfulness, purity of conduct and character, and of compassion and kindness. And, by the power of his own lofty, inspiring example as well as his dynamic, awakening teachings, to be saintly, to be a good Samaritan, to be holy in our thought, word and deed.

Thus his spiritual presence is not confined only to this sacred Samadhi Hall. After this morning's spiritual fellowship, as you return to your respective rooms, his presence walks beside you. As you enter your room, you enter into his presence. His presence is also there as the thoughts over which you are reflecting. His presence is not confined to this 60 minutes from 5 a.m. to 6 a.m. It pervades this entire Ashram and prevails at all times, from morning till night and during the night as well.

If you are conscious and aware of this presence, his presence is a hundredfold more; you feel it a hundredfold

more. If you are either in a state of forgetfulness or a state of distracted attention, with your thoughts elsewhere, then his presence does not lessen one bit, but you deprive yourself of his presence to that extent. You deprive yourself of his uplifting, inspiring spiritual support, of his elevating influence, even as one can deprive oneself of fresh air. If one tightly closes all the doors and windows of his room, the air will soon become stale. Not that there is not enough fresh air and light. It is there in plenty, but we deprive ourselves of it if we foolishly bar its entry by not understanding what we are doing.

So, whether it is done deliberately, or whether it is done unknowingly, the result is the same. We cut ourselves off from that which is very important, very valuable, very desirable and very necessary. Therefore, to cultivate conscious awareness of the wealth that we possess and conscious awareness of the need to utilise it moment by moment in all of life constitutes one of the important ingredients of discipleship. If this awareness of the immediate presence of the source of your inspiration is not consciously, diligently, carefully, patiently, earnestly, sincerely cultivated, then no harvest will come.

It is not sufficient for a farmer to just sow the seeds, important as that is. He must follow it up with great labour, unlimited toil, day after day until he reaps the harvest. It requires ceaseless vigilance to protect that which he has sown.

One of the essential ingredients of a true Buddhist, for example, is a conscious awareness that the great Enlightened One is not a was personality of 2500 years ago, but He is very much an is power an is principle, an is presence—an is factor and not a was personality. If this is lost, the Buddhism of the Buddhist lost.

The Christianity of a true, devout Christian is similarly such a living awareness of the here and now presence of the great Master: "When I rest at night, He is there beside me,

watching me. When I wake up in the morning, He is there beside me. When I go about my daily business of life. He is by my side." It is this awareness that makes one a real follower of the great Master.

For then, in this watchful presence and as true followers of an ideal teacher, we will at all times, upon each step of our day-to-day life, before we act, feel: "What will he think? How would he who is beside me want me to act at this moment? How would he wish me by my action to bear witness to my discipleship, to my loyalty to his teachings, to his perfection which I keep before me as my ideal?" For the disciple follows the ideal placed before him by the Guru in and through his own human personality.

The essence of discipleship, the essence of being a true follower of any great teacher, is, therefore, the awareness of the presence of that teacher-both as an ideal as well as a teaching, both as a light upon the path as well as the path. For the teacher's upadesa, his spiritual instructions, his wisdom teachings, shed light upon the path. And the teacher's life, by embodying all that is lofty and sublime, all that is noble and spiritual, becomes the way: "I should live even as my teacher lived. I should walk and talk even as he taught by the way he walked and talked."

Great teachers never belong to the past. They belong to the present as well as to the future. They are ever present. The Guru is never absent. He is never remote. He is always immediate, both in space as well as in time. He is even more immediate in Consciousness that does not relate either to space or to time. He is always there. You are always in It, and It is always within you. It is something that does not need the support of space or time.

Therefore, cultivate the consciousness of the permanent and perennial presence of the Guru: "He pervades

all my life. He prevails throughout my being and throughout the living of my life. He always prevails. He is with me morning, afternoon, evening and night. He is with me wherever I go, not merely when I go to his temple or his Samadhi. I am myself a living temple of his presence, and in and through me he continues to live and to shine. He draws me in the right direction from without, and he urges me in the right direction from within."

This, indeed, is the key to true discipleship and to a successful spiritual life. This is the way to obtain the highest and the maximum benefit from that being we call the spiritual master or the Guru. This is the inner spiritual truth about the subtle and unparalleled relationship of a sincere seeking soul and the Guru that is sent in order to put the individual soul into contact with the great, eternal, infinite and all-perfect Universal Soul that is at once our origin, our destination and our destiny as well.

This is the spiritual truth of the inner field of one's spiritual evolution unto Divine perfection. It is the "Guru factor" that is crucial for bridging the gap between the individual soul that is wandering in this phenomenal existence and the Universal Soul that is one's eternal abode, one's true eternal ground, one's real natural place of being, one's true home.

The Guru is, therefore, a visible manifestation of the love and compassion of the Universal Soul. And, the true spirit of discipleship is the manifestation of the grace and benedictions of the Universal Soul. When these two are present, a miracle happens-the miracle of spiritual transformation and a spiritual rebirth.

May you realise the loving compassion of God that has come to prevail in your life. May you realise the grace and the blessings of God that throbs within you vibrantly as your true spirit of discipleship. Realise both of them and become truly blessed !

BE AWARE OF THE GURU'S PRESENCE

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DOES THE GURU EVER DIE ?

There is a great tradition in the monarchy of England: "The throne shall never be empty; the country shall never be without a monarch." That is the tradition. The heir apparent instantly and simultaneously becomes the king the moment the last breath leaves the body of the ruling monarch. The announcement is made: "The king is dead. Long live the king!" It seems paradoxical, but no: The king is dead, but the king is not absent because the heir apparent has already assumed the status of monarch of the land.

Ponder this statement, this proclamation, "The king is dead. Long live the king!" When even in a secular set-up the secular monarch is never for a moment absent, can a spiritual dimension be lacking in this? Is it to be found wanting? Are we to think that we are without the *guru* because the *guru* is no more? The *guru* was and now he is not? Are we less than the positive tradition of the British throne? Is the secular set-up one step ahead, and we are one step behind? It's absurd to think that such a possibility exists.

The *guru* never dies because he lives in the disciple. That he may so live, he spends his life entering into the disciple in the form of his idealism, his ideas, his vision, his attitudes, his sense of values. His aim and objective for living is to ceaselessly and continuously strive and work so that he may live forever in and through each and every one of his disciples. The bright light of a candle never ceases to shine once another candle has been lit by its flame. It itself may be snuffed out, but it is already burning brightly upon another candle through another wick—the selfsame light.

Ponder this well! You are the being through whom the *guru* lives. This is an honour. This is a privilege. This is a great good fortune. It is also a responsibility; it is a duty; it is

a truth to be known and kept in mind always: "I must be what the *guru* has taught me to be. I must be what the *guru* was." But...

Somehow there is always a "but." You cannot rebut the previous statement, but Gurudev himself said in effect many times: "Do not do what I do, but do as I say. Do what I tell you. I have given you some instructions; carry them out. Don't try to imitate me. You may emulate me, you may try to be as I am in my nature, in my character, in my lofty, idealistic way of life, in my spiritual personality, but do not imitate me. Emulate me."

Imitation and emulation are two words whose distinction each disciple must know. Sankaracharya put his cloth over his head in a certain way. Today many people imitate that style of wearing a cloth. That is not discipleship; that is not spiritual emulation; that is not what he expected that you would be doing when he wrote *Vivekachudamani*, *Atma Bodha* etc. He did not write them down so that you would imitate the way he dressed. So if you make that your way of being like him, you will fail miserably.

You must make the vibrant spirituality of the *guru* live within you, the sublime idealism of the *guru* live within you, the spiritual teachings of the *guru* live within you. His loftiness of character and conduct should live within you. His divine nature and the divine way he lived his life should be relived in you. Looking at you, the world should understand the divinity of your *guru*.

So, Gurudev said: "Do what I tell you to do. Don't do what I do, because I do it on another level." Gurudev also said: "Obedience is better than reverence." Thus if the disciples know the difference between imitation and emulation and follow him through emulation and obedience, the *guru* never dies. Gurudev Swami Sivanandaji will never die as long

as there are sincere striving aspirants like all of you trying to walk the path of divine life, ever striving to fulfil in your thoughts, words and deeds the essence of his teachings.

Who then can say that Swami Sivananda was and not is. He is and he shall ever continue to *be*. Why? Because each one of you represents a radiant facet, a shining aspect of his noble, divinely lived life. Therefore, in and through his disciples he lives and continues to inspire hundreds and thousands.

This is a great privilege. This is a great *guru seva*. May you be engaged in doing it, and may you discriminate at every step so that you keep on emulating him and not go off at a tangent merely imitating him.

If for England the king never dies, in the spiritual world, the *guru* never dies. The disciples ensure that the light of the *guru*, the inspiration of the *guru*, the wisdom teachings of the *guru* will be perpetually present in human society in and through each one of themselves.

The *guru* *lives*, and he shines through each one of his disciples. Each one of you, therefore, are living lights of the Sivananda ideal of divine life. May God and Gurudev's grace and blessings enable you to do this most effectively, most fully and most successfully for the benefit of all humanity!"

THE GURU IS HIS TEACHINGS

By the light of the sun, the whole world awakens. By the light of the sun, darkness is banished, slumber gives place to wakefulness and sloth gives place to activity. By the light of the sun, all beings in this world see things, perceive things clearly. In darkness, one stumbles and falls, loses one's way and is ever in danger of injury. In the light one is able to proceed, move towards one's goal; one is safe from danger. All progress, all activity is temporarily suspended in darkness.

Thus the sun is the awakener; the sun is the enlightener; the sun is the *marga darsaka* (one who shows the path). It is the sun that guarantees smooth, unhampered progress towards each one's destination. When the sun is not there, one is, as it were, blind, even though having eyes.

In the life of a sincere seeking soul, in the life of a *jijnasu*, a *mumukshu*, a *sadhaka*, a spiritual aspirant, the *Guru* is, as it were, the sun. It is the *Guru* that awakens us from our slumber of ignorance. It is the *Guru* who, by his light, banishes the darkness of ignorance and wrong notions that the *jivatma* has about life, and brings in the light of right reasoning, right perception and right thought. It is the *Guru* that also makes us see the way, through his own lofty, sublime personal example, through his own dynamic philosophy, through his own teachings and personal instructions.

It is the *Guru* that points out the path and makes us see the path clearly. He points out the pitfalls and dangers upon the path, makes us alert, vigilant, *jagrit*. And, even as the sun initiates activity, so the *Guru* inspires us to arise, awake, seek knowledge, attain illumination and become forever blessed. All this and more the *Guru* does.

And the effulgence of the *Guru*, the radiance of the

Guru, the light of the *Guru*, is his teachings, *jnana-upadesa*. It is his message, his *sandesa*, his instruction, his *adesa*. These constitute the real *Guru* and these constitute real *guru kripa*.

What is *Guru's* grace? It is not some mysterious something that comes out of him, as *Gurudev* used to say, like water out of his *kamandalu*. His *kripa*, his *anugraha* (grace) is in the form of his *sandesa*, *upadesa* and *adesa*. They constitute the manifestation of his grace. His teachings, his admonitions, his instructions to us and his positive, imperative directives are the dynamic expression of his grace.

"Sleep no more; wake up; sit in *asana*; do *japa*. Meditate on the Supreme Being. Read one chapter of the *Gita*. Have *sattvic* diet. Be simple in life; reduce your wants. Control anger through *kshama* (forgiveness). Observe *mauna* for some time every day. Speak the truth at all costs. Observe *brahmacharya*. Do charity every day according to your ability. Introspect; find out your defects and remove them. Draw inspiration from elevating, inspiring *svadhyaya*; daily *svadhyaya* will increase your knowledge and wisdom; your mind will become transformed and your heart purified, elevated and inspired. Read the lives of saints. Thus progress day by day."

In this way, the *Guru* gives practical suggestions and warns that these are all important spiritual canons and must be observed rigidly. You should not give any leniency to the mind. And if you do something wrong, punish yourself, *atmadanda*. Great ones have progressed through this method only. These positive and imperative commandments, *adesa*, directives, to spiritual aspirants, sincere seekers, disciples, devotees, constitute *anugraha*. They constitute *guru kripa*. They constitute the light in our life, the light that illumines our

path and which shows clearly the goal that we have to attain.

Thus the *Guru* never passes away; the *Guru* is never absent. He is immortal and deathless and has come to teach us that we are immortal and deathless. As long as the sun and the moon and the stars continue to shine in the sky above us, the *Guru* is present in the lives of all beings in the form of his resplendent teachings. *Guru jnana-upadesa*, the wisdom teachings of the *Guru*, are our wealth and treasure. They represent for us visible *kripa*. They are for us, and they constitute, the ever-present light that shines and illuminates our life and the path before us.

Understand this clearly and walk in the light. Understand this clearly and know that the *Guru* is where there is reverence for his teachings, an eagerness to fulfil his teachings and a keen desire to follow the path pointed out by him. Where there is an earnest, ardent and fervent wish to move along that path, to practise his instructions, there the *Guru* is fully present and *guru kripa* is fully present. The *anugraha* of the *Guru* enriches such an aspirant.

Jagat Guru Lord Krishna is not present before us now. We cannot sit before Him and ask Him questions, put our problems before Him; we cannot write Him a letter and get His instructions in reply; we cannot telephone Him. He is not here. But as long as the sun, moon and stars shine in the sky, as long as the *Gita* is still a living treasure for humanity, who can say that Krishna does not live? Who can say that Krishna *kripa*, Krishna's *anugraha* is not there? Who can say that? Because He says that I am present in the *Gita*; My light is in the *Gita*; *Gita* is My very heart.

There are millions of Buddhists all over the world. Are they able to meet Buddha, ask Him questions, get replies, telephone Him? But yet, how many inspired souls there are

walking the noble Eightfold Path and attaining enlightenment, Buddhahood! They do not walk in darkness who have made Him their light, the sun of their life.

Because they have the right perception, millions upon millions are benefited by the teachings of the great ones. We have their grace, their presence, their strength and force and power and light in our lives. Their words are words of power. Their invisible presence is a force. Jivanmuktas never die—*brahmavit brahmaiva bhavati* (The knower of Brahman verily becomes Brahman). He becomes that which he has sought, the one supreme non-dual existence, *ekameva'dvitiyam brahma*. That the *brahma-jnani* becomes, and, therefore, he pervades, he is ever present, *sarvam khalvidam brahma*.

Put these truths together. The *brahma-jnani* is filled with Brahman, for *prajnanam brahma*—*jnana* itself is *Brahman*. *Buddhi* (knowledge) itself is *Brahman*. *Prajna* (awareness) itself is *Brahman*. And the enlightened one becomes *prajna*. He becomes *Brahman*, and *Brahman* IS, not was. *Brahman* is here, now. *Brahman* alone is; all this is filled with *Brahman-brahmaiva kevalam, sarvam brahmamayam*.

God has given us intelligence and discrimination—*viveka, vichara*. Think, ponder, reflect deeply. See the truth clearly before you; live in the light of the truth and forever become blessed.

Thus one should live a dynamic life guided by the light of the ever-present Guru's teachings. He dwells in, he works through, and in the spirit he is dynamically present in, his *Guru jnana-upadesa*. That is the real *Guru*. Otherwise, even if he is alive in flesh and blood before us, if one doesn't have the reverence to follow his teachings, he is as good as not existing for you. But, even if he does not exist, if you make his teachings the light and guide in your life, then he exists for you.

What is the sun if not its light? The sun is no sun if there is no light. The sun is the sun because it radiates perennial light, an inexhaustible, unbroken supply of light. Even so, the *Guru* is his *jnana-upadesa*.

Let us, therefore, rejoice that we have this treasure, we have this *kripa*. We are walking in the light of lofty, luminous, illuminating and enlightening teachings. Therefore, let us move with determination, enthusiasm, firm confidence and conviction that we shall attain and achieve in this very body, in this very life. For the force of the *Guru*, the power of the *Guru* infills us. The one thing needful is right perception, right understanding and right exertion, *purushartha*. Then everything becomes achieved. In time, everything becomes achieved.

THE GURU LIVES WITHIN YOU

Worshipful homage unto the eternal, beginningless and endless Cosmic Being, the Eternal Reality, nitya-satta, that is the source, support and goal ultimate of all existence, that is the all-pervading, indwelling Reality in the midst of the ever-changing and vanishing names and forms, one without a second, the Absolute, the ever present, the infinite. May His divine grace speed you towards the great goal of illumination, liberation and divine perfection!

Loving adorations to our revered and beloved Master, Gurudev, in whose invisible presence we are gathered together here at this moment, who, nevertheless, lives in each and every one of you as a vision, as an ideal and as a goal. His living wisdom teachings are the source of your inspiration. They are the force and power that urges you onward in a self-chosen direction towards an accepted goal and an adopted way of life.

Thus, he lives in you as the urge and aspiration to divine life. He lives in you as an aspiration to attain divine perfection. He lives in each one of you as a great longing and yearning to transcend the limitations of time and space and enter into that pure realm of eternity and infinity which is your natural, inalienable state, into your true, everlasting, unchanging, imperishable, immortal spiritual identity.

That is your abode. It is a state of consciousness, not a geographical location. It is a state of perennial, eternal experience, not any place to attain beyond the clouds. It is actually the substratum of your present state of exteriorised, objectified consciousness. It is the objectless centre of all things. It is your present state—the basis, the substratum upon which these ever-changing states of waking, dreaming and sleeping fitfully go on rotating, keep on coming and going.

Realise yourself as that which is the unchanging, the ever stable, the support of these three states, an unaffected, detached witness, a centre of illumined awareness, a centre of pure, distilled quintessence of unalloyed bliss, a centre of profound, imponderable peace that passeth understanding.

That is your inalienable state. Realise this and be established in the pure experience that "I am the Atman beyond name and form, transcending time and space, devoid of any limiting adjuncts. I am Existence-Consciousness-Bliss Absolute." Realise this and be free!

May the benedictions of beloved and adorable Holy Master and the supreme grace of the Divine enable you to reach this experience here and now. That should be your one aspiration, your one determination, your one longing, your one aim, and the one objective with which you live and breathe and act. Then alone you are fulfilling your life's divine mission. God bless you all!

What should be the response of the disciple

It is said that without Grace Divine that the proximity to a spiritual personality and the active benedictions and blessings of that spiritual personality are not possible in this earth plane. Our exceptional and rare circumstances of being provided with an ideal environment and all that is necessary and beneficial for our spiritual evolution proves that we are extremely fortunate recipients of God's grace, that God's grace is present in abundance in the life of each and everyone of us. If we recognise this truth we will feel uplifted; we will feel no room for despair.

In this Iron Age, in this world of ours, in the situation prevailing in human society today, we will realise how blessed we are to be in a spiritual atmosphere with the

rare blessedness of the company of other seekers. All these things and more have fallen to our lot thanks to divine grace, the blessings of saints and our own meritorious past.

Given these circumstances and given these facilities, if we will but make use of all our time and energy and direct our attention to the Goal Supreme, we can make each day a forward and onward process towards God-experience.

Therefore, lead a spiritual life, a divine life. Be essentially an aspirant and sadhaka. Have no other identity. In your subjective consciousness feel: "I am a seeker after the great Reality. That is my truth, that is my real identity. I am a seeker and Divine-experience is my goal, divine living is my way."

Thus, with God's help, absolute faith in the words of Gurudev and, above all, command over your own self, have an intense faith in your ability to attain the Goal, given the right exertion, the right effort. That indeed is the way of recognising the precious nature of the gift that you have received from God.

- Swami Chidananda

CHAPTER - 5 DIVINE NAME

THE DIVINE NAME

Blessed Immortal Atman! Beloved *sadhaks* and seekers upon the path that leads to fearlessness and freedom, upon the path that leads to the cessation of all sorrow, that brings about eternal satisfaction and the attainment of supreme bliss!

God is intangible: *avyakta, adrishta, agochara* (unmanifest, unseen, imperceptible). All this is made very clear in the Vishnu-sahasranama. He is *gudhah* (hidden): *eko devah sarvabhuteshu gudhah* (The one Lord is hidden in all beings). He is *sukshmati sukshma* (subtler than the subtlest), *avangmano-gochara* (not known by the senses or the mind), *yato vacho nivartante aprapya manasa saha* (whence all speech, along with the mind, turn back not reaching It). He is beyond thought, beyond speech.

What then is the way to approach God? We are bound in gross physical consciousness, severely limited to thinking in terms of name and form. Without the basis, support, of names and forms, there is no *vichara* (enquiry into the nature of the Self) in our *antahkarana* (inner being). That being the case, what is it that can link us with that which is beyond thought, speech and mind, beyond the grasp of the intellect? Is there some bridge for us bound us as we are in gross conceptual thinking, objective thought? All our *vrittis* are *vishayakara vrittis* (thoughts of sense-objects). We can only think in terms of time and space, name and form, here and there, this and that-not of the transcendental. Bound in this state of limited, finite consciousness, what is the possibility of trying to link ourselves with that which is infinite, with that which

is beyond time and space, beyond name and form?

It is here that the great science of the practice of the Divine Name comes as an answer to this problem, this great barrier between the known and the unknown, the finite and the infinite, the manifest and the unmanifest, the individual and the universal. The Divine Name is like a boatman who touches both banks. He comes to this bank and he can take us across, because he goes to the other bank as well. The Name has this great advantage.

God is intangible. Whatever we know of God in temples and mosques, synagogues and churches is only created by man, conceptual. We have to superimpose upon the symbols and images our imagination, our ideas of the higher Being. However, this intangible Being is present with us in one tangible aspect, which we can actually create, experience, feel and practise. That is Name, which we ourselves can articulate very clearly. It has a sound we can hear with our ear, and we can write it with our hand.

The *rupa* of Bhagavan (the form of God) is beyond our comprehension. But here is something, an aspect of God identical with Him, discovered in ancient times. It is the *mantra* (sacred syllable or word) of the supreme absolute Being. Here is a "being" that is name, and yet it is formless. Therefore it has contact with the formless world. Itself being devoid of *rupa* (form), being *nirakara* (formless), it has contact with the *nirakara parabrahma tattva* (formless supreme Reality). *Parabrahma* is *nirakara*, *nirguna* (without form, without attributes), but here It is *nirakara* but *saguna* (formless but with attributes). It is in the form of *sabda* (sound). It is in the form of *nama*. It has vibration. It has a tangible sound form which we can hear with our gross ear. We can even put it on tape, reproduce it, amplify it, broadcast it. So, here is something which you can do what you like with.

And the greatest, astounding truth about it is: it is Divinity in manifestation as sound. It is Divinity manifest as *sabda* or *nada* (the primal mystic sound), which Vedanta refers to as *sabda-brahman*, *nada-brahman*. He Who is beyond *nada* is caught by *nada*. He can be thus approached by this particular *nada* because it is *nirakara*. So, it is at once a *tattva* (principle) that has access to the beyond, the formless *parabrahma tattva*, to that field, and at the same time it has access to *saguna* (with attributes), the field in which we are living.

For us, everything has some quality. And this has one of the five main qualities perceived by us (form, taste, sound, touch, smell). It has *sabda* (sound) and is identical with God. *Nama* and *nami* (The Lord and His Name) are identical. Thus, every mantra composed out of the Divine Name, containing the Divine Name, framed around the Divine Name—Om Namah Sivaya, Om Namo Narayanaya, Om Sri Ram, Om Sri Krishnaya Namaha—every *mantra* is structurised around this direct manifest form of the Supreme Self in the form of *nada*, that is *nama*.

Therefore, Patanjali has a *sutra* which says that perfection can be obtained through repetition of the Name. And Jagat Guru Lord Krishna says: "He who repeats My Name at the time of leaving the body attains Me. He does not return once again into this mortal world." *Abheda, abhedata* of *nama* and *nami* (The non-difference, identity of the Lord and His Name) has been established by the direct experience of those who have practised this path and attained perfection.

And one among those whom we know within historical memory, who attained *sakshatkara* (realisation) sheerly through making use of the Divine Name, was the Guru of Shivaji, Sri Samartha Ramdas, who knew nothing, who did nothing except practise "Sri Ram Jai Ram Jai ai Ram." And

on the other side of the Indian subcontinent, Chaitanya Mahaprabhu attained Divine-consciousness, was inebriated with God-consciousness, through *nam sankirtan*: "Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Hare Hare, Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare." He spread this great way to God-consciousness throughout the length and breadth of India. He established the supremacy of the Name as the one unfailing, sure method in Kali Yuga. *Kaliyuga kevala nama adhara* (The Name of the Lord is the only refuge in this Iron Age).

And it is only the revival of an ancient method. Even before Lord Rama incarnated Himself in this world, the hunter and dacoit Ratnakar attained perfection through constant practice of the Divine Name. He was illiterate, uncouth, uneducated, of the forest hunting tribe, and he actually did the Name in the wrong way, *ulta* (reverse). As the great Tulsidas said: "The whole world knows that Valmiki attained Brahmic-consciousness, attained the realisation of *aham brahmasic* by doing *japa*, even in a wrong way." He is renowned in Indian spiritual history as one who attained the supreme state of Brahmic-consciousness by *japa* and *japa* alone, because he knew nothing else. He did not know Sanskrit, nor Vedanta, nor the Upanishads, nor the Bhagavata, anything. He did not know *hatha yoga*, nor *ashtanga yoga*, nor *kundalini*, anything. He did not know *asana*, *pranayama*, anything. And, therefore, he could only do what he was capable of doing. He got hold of Ram Nam and became endowed with Brahmic-consciousness, became an illumined sage. He became the great sage Valmiki who produced the immortal epic, the Valmiki Ramayana. He had been a murdering desperado—cruel, violent, a sinner—yet he became one with Brahman in his spiritual consciousness solely through the repetition of the Divine Name.

All saints and spiritual teachers who have come in India over the past three or four hundred years have never failed to emphasise and lay great stress upon the practice of the Divine Name as the unfailing and certain way to attain God-realisation. And Gurudev, in the third of his Twenty Spiritual Instructions says: "Do *japa* of some *mantra* or just Om, according to your taste or inclination, from 108 to 21,000 times daily." The Yogic calculation of human breathing is that there are 21,000 breaths within each cycle of twenty-four hours. They say that with each breath utter the Name of God. Therefore, the third instruction is to take up this unfailing, sure path. In this lies your highest welfare. The path of the Divine Name in this Kali Yuga is the supreme, the least complicated, the most efficacious, unfailing, simple and powerful path. May Gurudev's grace and blessings give you success in your spiritual life and *sadhana*. God bless you !

THE DIVINE NAME - A SAMPOORNA YOGA

God is intangible, *avyakta* (unmanifest), *adrishta* (unseen) *agochara* (imperceptible). All this is made very clear in the *Vishnu Sahasranama*. He is *goodhah* (hidden): *Eko devah sarva bhuteshu goodhah* (the one Lord is hidden in all beings). He is *sukshma-atisukshma* (subtler than the subtlest), *avangmanogochara* (not known by the senses or the mind). *Yato vacho nivartante aprapya manasa saha* (whence all speech along with the mind, turn back, not reaching it). He is beyond thought, beyond speech.

What then is the way to approach God? We are bound in gross physical consciousness, severely limited to thinking in terms of names and forms only. Without the basis or support of these names and forms there is no *vichara* (enquiry) in our *antahkarana* (inner being). That being the case, what is it that can link us with *That* which is beyond thought, speech, mind and intellect. Is there some bridge that can link us, bound as we are to outer appearances, bound in gross conceptual and objective thinking, to that which is beyond? All our *vrittis* (thoughts) are *vishayakara vrittis* (thoughts of sense objects). We can only think in terms of time and space, names and forms, here and there, this and that, and not of the Transcendental. Bound in this state of limited finite consciousness, what is the possibility of our trying to link ourselves with that which is Infinite, beyond time and space, beyond names and forms. It is here that the great science of the practice of the Divine Name comes as an answer to this great problem, this barrier between the known and the unknown, the finite and the Infinite, the manifest and the unmanifest, the individual and the Universal. There is a chasm of relativity between us, the individual souls caught in the *aneka* (many), and the *ekameva'dvitiyam* (the Absolute).

The Divine Name is such a link. It is like a boatman who ferries and touches both banks of the river. It has the advantage, that like a ferryman, it can take us from this bank of finite consciousness to the other bank of Infinite, Universal Consciousness. The Name has this great advantage.

God is intangible. Whatever we know of Him in temples, mosques, synagogues and churches is only created by man-conceptual and man-created. Upon all idols and *murtis* we have to superimpose our own imagination of a higher Being. However, this intangible Being is present with us in one tangible aspect which we can actually feel, experience, create and practise, that is the Divine Name which we ourselves can articulate very clearly. It has a sound which we can hear and we can write it also.

The form of God is beyond our comprehension. But here is something, an aspect of God, identical with Him, discovered in ancient times - the *mantra* (sacred syllables) of the Supreme Absolute Being. Here is a sound that is formless and therefore, it has contact with the formless world. *Parabrahman* is *nirakara* (formless) and *nirguna* (without attributes) whereas the Divine Name is *nirakara* (formless) but *saguna* (with attributes). It is in the form of *sabda* (sound), it is in the form of *nama* (name), it has a vibration, it has a tangible sound which we can hear. We can produce it on gramophone records, we can produce it on tape-recording machines. We can put it into any media and once again reproduce it. We can send it across the seas, we can amplify it, we can broadcast it through microphones. So here is something we can do what we like with, and the greatest astounding truth about it is, it is Divinity in manifestation as sound. It is Divinity manifest as *sabda* or *nada* (sound) which Vedanata refers to as *sabda-Brahma*, *nada-Brahma*. He who is *nada-bindu-kalatita* (beyond sound, time and space) is

caught by *nada* (sound). He can be thus approached by this particular *nada* because it is formless. So, it is at once that *tattva* (principle) that has access to both fields - the formless *Parabrahma* field and the *saguna* field of names and forms in which we are living.

For us everything has some quality, and sound is one of the five (Five qualities: form, taste, touch, sound and smell) main qualities perceived by us. *Sabda-brahma, nada-brahma* is identical with God. The Lord and His Name is identical. Thus, every *mantra* composed of the Divine Name, containing the Divine Name, framed around the Divine Name like: *Om Namah Sivaya, Om Namo Narayanaya, Om Sri Ram, Om Sri Krishnaya Namah, Om Sri Ramaya Namaha*, is structured around this *sakshaat pragat swaroop paramatma* (direct manifest form of the Supreme Self).

Patanjali has a *sutra* which says that perfection can be attained by the repetition of the Divine Name, and Jagat Guru Lord Krishna says: "He who repeats My Name at the time of leaving the body, attains Me. He does not return once again into this mortal world." The *abheda*, the *abhedata* of *nama* and *nami* (the identity of the Lord and His Name) has been established by direct experience by those who have practised this path and attained perfection. One among those whom we know within historical memory, who attained Self-realisation through the practice of the Divine Name, was the Guru of Shivaji, Samartha Ramdas, who knew nothing and did nothing except repeat *Sri Ram Jai Ram Jai Jai Ram*. On the other side of the Indian sub-continent, in Bengal, Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu attained the great state of Divine consciousness, became inebriated with God-consciousness through *nama sankirtan* of Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna Hare Hare, Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama Hare Hare. He travelled to Vrindavan and throughout

the length and breadth of India and established the supremacy of the Name as the one unfailing sure method for attaining God-consciousness in this *Kali Yuga* (Iron Age). *Kali Yuga kevala nama adhara* - "The Name of the Lord is the only refuge in this Iron Age."

Repetition of the Divine Name is only a revival of an ancient method. Long before Lord Rama incarnated in this world, the hunter and dacoit Ratnakar attained perfection through constant practice of the Divine Name, the Name made up of two letters *Ra* and *Ma*- the *Taraka mantra*. He did not know anything. He was illiterate, uncouth, uneducated, from a forest hunting tribe, and he actually repeated the Name in the wrong way. In Sant Tulsidasji's *Sri Ramcharit Manas* there is a saying;

*Ulta naama japata jaga jaana
Valmiki bhaye Brahma samaana*

"The whole world knows that Valmiki attained Brahmic-consciousness, attained the great realisation *Aham Brahmasmi* by doing *japa* even in a wrong way."

He became renowned in Indian spiritual history as one who had attained that supreme state of Brahmic consciousness by *japa* and *japa* alone. He did not know Sanskrit, he did not know Vedanta, he did not know the *Upanishads*, he did not know the *Bhagavata*, he did not know *Ashtanga Yoga* or *Kundalini Yoga*, he did not know *asana* or *pranayama*. He did not know anything. Therefore, he could only do what he was capable of doing. Even though he was unlettered he became endowed with Brahmic-consciousness and thus became an illumined Sage. He became the great sage *adi-kavi* Valmiki who produced the immortal epic the *Valmiki Ramayana*. He was a murdering desperado, a dacoit, cruel, violent, a sinner yet he became one with Brahman in his spiritual consciousness through the repetition of *Rama Nama*.

Therefore, with every breath utter the name of God.

Take to this unfailing sure path - the path of the Divine Name. In this *Kali Yuga* it is supreme. It is the least complicated, most efficacious and simple method. All saints and spiritual teachers of India over the past 300 or 400 years have never failed to lay great emphasis on the practice of the Divine Name as an unfailing and certain way to attain God-realisation.

Gurudev says. "Do *japa* of any Name that is to your taste or just 'OM' from 108 times each day to 21,600 times, that is from one mala to 200 malas (21,600 are the number of breaths that we take every 24 hours). The more the better!" A trader or businessman never questions : "How much should I earn?" He ever tries to increase his wealth. Like that this great golden key has been given for you to attain *chitta-suddhi* (purification of mind), *bhakti* (devotion), *dharana* (concentration), *dhyana* (meditation), *ekagrata-dhyana* (one-pointed meditation) and ultimate *sakshatkara* (Realisation). It is a *sampoorna yoga* (complete Yoga).

May His Grace and blessings give you success in your inner spiritual life, in *yoga abhyasa* and spiritual *sadhana*.

DIVINE NAME

I wish to bring to your attention a great act of grace by Bhagavan. Due to the rule of Kali Purusha in the fourth Yuga, there is the power of darkness. Krita Yuga is Golden Age, Treta Yuga is Silver Age, Dvapara Yuga is Copper Age and Kali Yuga is Iron Age. An iron piece rusts very easily and if it hurts you it becomes septic. In Krita Yuga, Treta Yuga and Dvapara Yuga spiritual activities were easier and they got results because there was dominance of Sattva. After that gradually more and more Rajo Guna came. Bhakti and Bhajan are very difficult in Kali Yuga as there is dominance of more Tamo Guna and everywhere there is darkness, ignorance, Raga-Dvesha and Asuri Sampad. You all know how the Srimad Bhagavata Mahapurana starts. It starts with the Prasanga of Narada coming across a mother and son, Bhakti and Vairagya, in a state of great oldness, dilapidated, weak and sick. When he asked them who they were and why they were suffering, the mother answers, "I am Bhakti and he is Vairagya. Kali Yuga has come, therefore, we have no strength. We have become helpless. We have been overcome by weakness." So, what is the way to revive? Hear the Mahima, the glory of Bhagavan; by listening to the Lila of Bhagavan you will develop Prema, attachment and Bhakti for Bhagavan and then that will become a way of release from the bondage of Kali Yuga. Even Bhakti became helpless and lost her strength. So did Vairagya. There is no Bhakti, no Vairagya in Kali Yuga. There is a lack of Dharma. There is Adharma everywhere and in the name of Dharma, Adharma is done, in the name of spirituality unspiritual things are done. In the name of truth, man will swear, 'I swear by God that I will speak the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth'. And when he is swearing also, he knows that he is going to tell lies. So the oath itself is

a falsehood before a witness. Without blinking an eyelid people come, take the witness stand and take the oath by God saying that they will speak the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, knowing full well that they have been told to lie and they have agreed to lie and they are going to lie the next moment. It is a very difficult problem to know who is telling the truth and who is not. The problem is not of who is telling a falsehood, but of who is telling a lesser falsehood.

So that is the effect of Kali Yuga. Everywhere untruth, everywhere dishonesty, everywhere hypocrisy, everywhere showing something outside, being something inside. People maintain three account books, one for oneself, private, one for the business partner and one for the Income-tax Officer. Son deceives the father, father deceives the son, husband deceives the wife, wife deceives the husband, brother deceives brother, leaders deceive the public. Whenever I meet Gulzarilal Nandaji he always says, "Swamiji, what has our nation come to? In the name of Dharma, in the name of religion, people practise deceit, people tell falsehood, people are hypocrites, people dupe the public and therefore all faith has been lost. People have lost belief in temples and religion, even in spirituality and saints, because they have had bitter experiences. All appearances are made for inner deceit and people have lost all faith and belief." He speaks of bribery, corruption, dishonesty, among all people. He is trying his best since many years to try to find a way to make people honest. He has failed.

In this state of affairs, when instead of truth, nonviolence, chastity, only violence, bad conduct and falsehood is being practised, what is the state of spiritual Sadhakas, really sincere spiritual people, who want to move towards God, who want to progress spiritually? They are caught in this situation where nine out of ten people are totally

devoid of any sense of conscience or Dharma-Adharma, good and bad, right and wrong. That is the situation. How can spiritual people pull on in this atmosphere? As a great assurance, great message of hope, Srimad Bhagavata says that in spite of it being Kali Yuga, in spite of the prevalence of Adharma, Atyachara, Asatya, Durachara and all this Andhakara, Kali Yuga contains one redeeming feature, one very great quality. Therefore, some even say that they are very fortunate to be born in Kali Yuga. What is that redeeming feature of Kali Yuga? In Kali Yuga Bhagavan has so laid down, so arranged, that only by the power of the 'Japa' of His Divine Name you can attain liberation, you can free yourself from the clutches of Kali and become liberated. In this ocean of evil called Kali Yuga, there is one great good quality. Merely through the chanting of the Divine Name of the Lord, human beings will become liberated from all sin, from all bondage and impurity .

So when that Name is there what is there to fear? Take shelter in the Divine Name. No matter whether you are a Vedantin or a Raja Yogi or a Karma Yogi, don't leave the practice of the Divine Name. Let the practice of the Divine Name—Japa—be an integral part of your Sadhana. Do Japa with faith, with devotion, with deceit-free nature, and feeling the presence of the Divine. 'God is here and now, He is all-pervading, therefore when I call Him, He immediately looks at me with a glance of Grace, showering Grace upon me, because He is not far off. He is close to me.' With this great understanding, take to the practice of the Divine Name. Name is the great liberating force that can help you cross the ocean of Samsara in Kali Yuga. Hearing the message of hope, you need not despair. We need not think that in this age of darkness, of Kali Yuga, how is it possible to attain liberation. The Lord says, 'Yes, I have made it very, very easy in this Kali

yuga, knowing the condition of man, his helplessness and weakness'. He has so made it, that in spite of all the drawbacks of Kali Yuga, He made Bhagavadsakshatkara easy, simple, through a direct method. 'Through the Name itself you can attain God'. Those who have attained God through this method, ultimately discovered the great secret. They said Name and God are one and the same. They are not different. They are identical. Nami and Nama are the same. There is no difference. Appearing in two different forms, they are actually one and the same. A silver Rupee has two sides, but these two sides are of one coin only. In as much as this side is Rupee, that side is also as much the same Rupee. So they are obverse and reverse of the same coin.

I constantly tell people when they take the Mantra: "Mantra is Pragat-svarupa Paramatma. Bhagavan assumes Mantrasvarupa and comes into the life of the Jiva in order to do Uddhara to the Jiva." So Mantra is a form assumed by the Lord Himself as Sabda or Nada. Parabrahma is Sakara Saguna and Nirakara Saguna and Nirakara Nirguna. Sakara Saguna is Rama, Krishna, Vishnu, Sankara and all that. Nirakara Nirguna is Parabrahma Tattva. But Nirakara Saguna is Nama. It has no shape but it is all the Gunas, Santi, Satya, Jnana, Jyoti, Sakti filled with Divine potentiality. Each Name is a powerful centre of Divine potentialities and it can take you to the highest blessedness. God identified Himself with the practice of Nama-Sadhana in Bhagavad Gita. He said, 'Among all the ways of attaining spiritual beatitude, among all the ways of offering yourself unto Me, I am Japa Yajna Yajnanam japayajnosmi.' Yajna means offering yourself to God. He identifies Himself with the method of offering yourself, your consciousness to the Divine, through the practice of the Divine Name and those who base their Sadhana upon the practice of the Divine Name are very, very safe. Don't think that only

the Bhaktas practise the Divine Name. Vedantins are expected to do Pranava Japa or the Mahavakya Japa. They also do Japa. Sannyasins also do Pranava Japa. But they do it with Eka Bhava. Between Bhakta and Bhagavan there is a relationship, either of Dasya or Sakhya or Vatsalya or Madhurya or Santa Bhava-five Bhavas. They do it with this sentiment.

When you are engaged thus in doing Japa Sadhana, there are a few rules that you must adhere to. You must have for yourself some irreducible minimum as your daily quota of your Japa Sadhana; less than that you must never do. You can do more, the more you do, the more will be the benefit. But you should not fail to do less than that prefixed minimum. It is very beneficial if you can do it in the morning itself, so that in case due to any pressure or special work you are not able to finish the required quota, then you can finish it that same night. If you keep it for the night and you don't finish it, saying I will add it to tomorrow's quota then you will have a problem. So you should not go to bed before you finish that day's quota. That is the safest method. Minimum Japa for the day should be fixed and adhered to, without fail.

Secondly, when you are doing Japa, you must also think of the Lord. Keep a picture of the Lord in front of you, look at it, and go on doing the Japa. Then close your eyes and try to visualize God inside. Thus you must go on doing Bhagavat-chintana and Japa both combined together. Another way of doing it is by writing the same Mantra in a specially kept notebook, every day at a time when you will not be disturbed. Pick up the notebook and with a very beautiful handwriting, paying good attention, without haste, without hurry, with great Bhava and feeling, you must write, with intense concentration, Once you take up that writing, you should not stop until you have finished that one page or half

page, whatever you have fixed for yourself. At that time you should neither talk, nor look here and there. You should observe Mouna for the duration of writing. If the telephone rings or someone knocks at the door, someone calls, do not respond. This Niyama should be observed in Likhita-Mantra Japa and it will give you maximum benefit specially if you give it a lot of concentration. It is advisable that you do the Japa at a fixed hour and the same time every day. A certain power is thereby generated in that Asana. The moment you sit for Japa, the mind becomes Antarmukti and Sattvic. There is no Vikshepa, no distraction due to the force of Samskaras and vibrations of the Japa, day after day, at the same time, same place. The Asana also becomes very holy by doing this practice regularly at the same place, on the same Asana.

Even though you may have Dhyana of Sakara Saguna Svarupa of your Ishtadeva, even though you may be doing little Upasana, Mukti Upasana, during your Puja, yet you must understand, your Ishtadeva also has got a Paratpara Svarupa. This Paratpara Svarupa is without name, without form. It is Satchidananda-Sarvavyapi Satchidananda. Whether it is Narayana or Siva or Saravanabhava or Kartikeya or Subramanya or Rama or Krishna or Devi. All these Svarupas of your Ishtadeva have a Paratpara Svarupa in which it is unlimited. It is Pure Consciousness and in that Paratpara Svarupa your Ishtadeva is not confined to that Akriti but all-pervading. In that all-pervading, subtle, spiritual aspect, He is present everywhere. Wherever you are, whatever you are engaged in doing, morning till night, He is present everywhere. He is also present within you as your Antaryamin Bhagavan, thus making your body a holy place, a sacred place, a temple of the living God. Thus you must realise the sanctity of God, knowing that your Ishtadeva as Paratpara Svarupa is seated in your heart, as your Antaryamin, Satchidananda Svarupa,

Jyotirmaya Paramjyoti Svarupa Bhagavan. He is seated in your heart and He is seated in the hearts of all beings. He pervades everywhere. So, no matter what your Karyakshetra, you are doing it in the Sannidhya of Bhagavan. Feel the presence of God, feel the presence of the Divine. This being the truth, that He is Sarvatra, Sarvam Krishnamayam Jagat, Sarvam Vishnumayam Jagat, Sarvam Sivamayam Jagat, Sarvam Saktimayam Jagat, whatever your Ishta, you must regard Jagat as being Ishtamayam Jagat. Develop this vision and this Bhav. Therefore, when your entire life, all your Vyavahara, all your Kartavya Karmas, all your Vyavaharic life is being lived in His presence, it should be lived worshipfully. Whatever you do, do worshipfully and offer it at the feet of the Lord. Even in the midst of your activity have a constant unbroken Bhagavat-smaran. You can repeat your Ishta-naam or Mantra mentally during the Vyavaharic time. The repetition need not be confined only to that time of Japa Sadhana. Repetition can go on even when you are in the midst of activity.

Someone asked me if the Japa can go on in the bathroom or in the lavatory. If you are doing with Nishkamya Bhav, only for the sake of propitiating God, only for His Darshan, only for obtaining Bhagavad-darshan and Moksha, then there are no restrictions on Desa, Kaala or anything else. At all times and anywhere you can do-lavatory, bathroom, urinal-everywhere. Before bath, after bath, before eating, after eating, all time is time for Japa. All time is fit and suitable and sacred because you are doing it in the presence of God. As a matter of fact, it has got the power of transforming impure places into pure places. If you are sitting in the lavatory, if you utter the Name of God, the lavatory becomes a holy place. Where there is God, where there is Nama, that place is a holy place. It is a sacred place. There cannot be any impurity about it. It is an all-purifying agent and has great power, universal

power. How can impurity remain there? When you bring in light, darkness must fly; no matter what darkness it is, it must fly. So that is the power of light. You cannot pollute Ganga-jal. Ganga-jal is always purifying. It is just like Ganga-jal. His Name is to be constantly remembered, constantly uttered, mentally, in the midst of Vyavahara. It is the all-purifying Divine power. There is nothing in this universe to equal that all-purifying Divine power. It is the Power of powers and has been given to us because we are fortunate to be born in Kali Yuga. This has been made the Supreme Path to attain God. Nama itself is enough to sustain us in Kali Yuga. The only thing is that under the cloak of the Name, you should not do wrong things. 'It is all-purifying, it will free me from all sins; therefore I can commit sin today also and tomorrow I can be purified if I utter the Name.' This mischievous attitude is not good.

There are ten Nama-aparadhas. One of them is using the Divine Name for negative purposes. Another great Aparadha is swearing by the Divine Name. You should never take the Name for Sakshi; it is a great Aparadha. By bathing in the Ganga all sin is washed away. So, if you are living by the banks of Ganga, you cannot think 'every day I am taking bath, so every day I can do what I want, every day I will be purified'. This should not be done. This is a Nama-aparadha. You must be very, very careful. You must treat the Nama with sanctity, respect and reverence. Nama, the sacred Name of God, must not be used for any wrong things. Use it only for getting Bhagavat-anugraha, and Kaivalya Samrajya, Kaivalya Moksha. Keep the repetition of the Divine Name secret and sacred. It is between you and God. Any third person is not concerned with it. So we should not utter it in the presence of others. When you are alone you can utter it with full voice; otherwise do Manas Japa, mentally and in silence. If the Guru says, you must repeat at least so many Malas per day without

fail, you should not stick to the minimum. The minimum number is prescribed in the beginning of your Sadhana, so that you don't neglect your Sadhana. It is your duty to see that this minimum is gradually raised as you go on advancing in spiritual Sadhana.

Ultimately, I would like to tell you one other indispensable thing. Even though Name has been declared to be the Supreme Power by which you can be liberated, you can overcome the influence of Kali in this Iron Age, dark Iron Age, if you want to go beyond death. If you take a little bit of , if you take a little bit of nectar or ambrosia you become deathless and immortal. But if someone is prepared to give you Amritam and you go to him and he asks, "What have you brought? Have you brought a little plate or a cup or a container?" and you say, "No, I have not brought anything", then how can you take it? If you have to take Amritam, you have to bring something to hold it. In the same way to practice the Divine Name, you should have a Patra. Patra has two meanings, vessel and also fitness Patratvam. So there should be something to contain it. What is that in which the practice of the Divine Name becomes well-contained? Generally, as I told you, that Container is called Dharma. If there is Dharma all our spiritual Sadhana becomes fruitful. It is in the receptacle of Dharma that you can put the seed of spiritual Sadhana and the tree of spiritual life will grow and give you the fruit of Moksha. It is in the frame-work of Dharma that all good works and all Sadhana become successful.

CHAPTER - 6

DIVINE LIFE

DIVINE LIFE

Gurudev Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj appeared in this 20th Century to proclaim to mankind his sublime message of Divine Life. According to him, such a life is divine that is lived in the awareness that you are essentially an eternal and imperishable divine spirit, you are immortal Atman, you are not this perishable cage of flesh and bones, you are not merely this restless and impure mind filled with selfishness, anger, hatred, passion, greed, cravings, etc. Neither are you this limited and finite intellect, which is many a time prone to error and fails you at the time of need in solving your problems. But beyond body, senses, mind and intellect, you shine resplendent as an Eternal and Immortal Spirit. Satchidananda (Existence Absolute, Consciousness Absolute, Bliss Absolute) is your real nature, because you are an eternal part of that Supreme Universal Spirit whom we refer to as God. He is the Cosmic Being, the eternal source and origin of your very existence and you are inseparably connected with Him in the inner dimension of your real nature, your spiritual nature, which is in fact your true identity.

Gurudev Swami Sivanandaji beheld the state of restlessness in which mankind dwelt in this modern world with its insecurity, with its clash and conflict, discord and disharmony. In spite of having material wealth and opulence, man was not happy, he had no peace, he was ever restless and he was ever unhappy and unsatisfied. Master Swami Sivanandaji was a cosmic friend and benefactor and out of his over-whelming love and compassion for all beings, he decided to show them the path to blessedness in and through

the normal life in this world and this path is the path of Divine Life.

The message of Divine Life calls upon mankind to realize that you are only a passing pilgrim here upon this planet earth. This is not your eternal dwelling Place. You come from an abode of Eternal Peace, Joy and sunshine, a divine abode beyond all sorrow, pain and suffering where there is eternal peace and supreme Bliss. Due to Karma, the force of the great Law of Karma, temporarily you have come into this state of physical embodiment. The meaning and purpose of this earth life is that it is a golden opportunity, a rare chance given to you to utilize it in order to once again regain your temporarily lost connection with the Supreme Universal Being, who is of the very nature of Bliss and Peace. It is to make use of this life for this process of regaining your lost contact with the Divine, that all the saints and sages have come and taught us the way to attain God-consciousness and God-experience, by which one passes beyond all sorrow and becomes established in a state of absolute Divine Bliss and is for ever liberated from all pain, suffering, fear and bondage. That state of liberation is called Moksha . This is the supreme goal of life. Moksha means *sarva duhkha nivitti, paramananda prapti* and *nitya tripti*, that is, liberation from all pain, sorrow and suffering and attainment of supreme Divine Bliss and eternal satisfaction in that state of liberated consciousness.

To attain this, Gurudev showed to mankind an easy path which can be practised even while one is living in this world, fulfilling all one's obligations to one's dependents and doing one's duties and engaging in activity which is inevitable to this secular existence in this materialistic world. In and through this world and in and through this secular life to attain that supreme God-experience which is the sumnum bonum of life for the supreme goal of human existence, that is the

purpose of Divine Life. Divine Life is a life lived in the awareness that you are essentially divine, that you are not this perishable cage of flesh and bones, but your real identity is something supra-mundane, which is without beginning and without end, which is timeless and eternal, which is without birth and death, which is imperishable, indestructible and immortal. Thou art the Immortal Soul. Thou art the Eternal Imperishable Atman. Lord Krishna declares, '*ajo nityah sasvatoyam purano na hanyate hanyamane sarire*'—Unborn, Eternal, Permanent and Timeless is this dweller within the body and He is not affected by the birth or death of the body. Weapons cannot injure you, fire cannot burn you, water cannot wet you, wind cannot dry you. You are therefore the Eternal, Immortal Atman.

To live in this awareness is the basis of Divine Life. Divine Life is also lived in the awareness that your source and origin is that Eternal Cosmic Being, Infinite Existence, Eternal Bliss and Peace whom we call God. He is the basis of all religions. He is the source and origin of all religions. He is the goal of all religions. Even though called by different names as Brahman or Atman or Jehova or Ahura Mazda or Father in Heaven or Allah, Ek Omkar Satnam, that Supreme Cosmic Reality is One and non-dual. It is that Reality which is worshipped in all places of worship: Hindu temple, Jewish synagogue, Christian church, Islamic mosque and Gurudwara of the Sikhs. It is One Being, glorified in all the scriptures of the world. To attain That Being is the supreme goal and purpose of life. Divine Life proclaims that the goal of life is God-realization, attaining which one becomes liberated from rebirth and all sorrow, pain and suffering. To lead this Divine Life, you need not renounce your house and family, property and profession, you need not run away into some forests or mountain top and live in a cave. Even living as you are, leading

your normal life of domestic set up and your professional life and activities and your social life, you can attain this supreme goal and become forever blessed.

To attain this, the way of Divine Life shown by Gurudev is first and foremost to purify your heart and rid it of the dross and rubbish and impurity of selfishness by plunging into absolute dedicated selfless service. Be a Maha Paropakari. Ever be intent, ever be eager in order to serve all: to serve the sick, to serve the poor, to serve the suffering and sorrowful, to encourage those who are in despair and feel yourself to be blessed if you get an opportunity of serving, helping and not only your fellow beings, but all creatures of God upon this earth. By thus renouncing selfishness and engaging in motiveless, desireless, selfless service, one's heart becomes purified and in such a pure heart, there arises devotion for God and with the devotion, engage yourself in daily worshipping the Supreme who is the very basis of your being, who is the very innermost core of your consciousness and who is the very centre of your existence.

God is not some supra-mundane remote reality, far away from you, but God is here and now. He is the all-pervading Reality, the ever present Divine Spirit pervading this entire Universe and also He is your innermost, He is the Antaryamin. He is closer to you than your very breath. Never forget this and therefore, out of a heart filled with love for Him engage in prayer and worship every day. Thus, try to re-establish a living connection, a living link and relationship of spiritual love with the supreme source of your being in God. And this process of daily worshipping and praying to the Lord has the power to gradually steady the restless mind and overcome its fickle nature. It removes the Vikshepa Sakti of the mind, steadies the mind and gradually brings about the state of restfulness and concentration in the mind. At this stage

you enter into the third practice of Divine Life namely withdrawing the mind and controlling the senses and controlling the thoughts and attaining to a state of concentration and with a concentrated mind, meditating upon the Supreme Divine Reality or God. Daily meditation.

Selfless service is the foundation of Divine Life. Devotion and worship bring about a progress and an upward and Godward ascent in your life. As devotion and prayerfulness intensifies itself, the mind attains a state of concentration and you enter into a state of regular daily meditation upon the divine object of your quest. Regular daily meditation brings about steadiness and a feeling of abidance in God. You begin to feel the presence of God in your heart. And the power of meditation is such that even when you are engaged in your daily activities, either at home or in your professional field or in society—it creates a steady, unbroken under-current of 'God thought' or 'God awareness'. This is the effect of regular of meditation.

When you begin to feel the presence of God, you become aware of the presence of God at all times, everywhere even in the midst of your activities. You begin to feel that you live, move and have your being in God. This is the power of meditation. It brings about in your life God-awareness and also it brings about in your thoughts, words and activities a new spiritual quality, which uplifts and elevates your life to a new standard of purity, of spirituality, of compassion, of kindness and holiness. Thus, you become a transformed being, a spiritual being with purity of character, with sublime sentiments, with spiritual emotions and lofty thoughts of the Divine. And having entered into this state of God-awareness, your intellect becomes purified and within it, dawns the power of spiritual enquiry, philosophical enquiry and discrimination—discrimination between the Eternal and the non-eternal, the

changeless Eternal Reality and the merely passing appearance, Atman and the Anatman, the Permanent and the passing, the Reality and the appearance, the Eternal and the non-eternal.

This process of discrimination or Viveka should be carried on all the waking hours of your every day life. Thus, through constant discrimination, you begin to reject that which is unspiritual and undivine, you begin to reject the passing, changeful appearances of this phenomenal world and you begin to direct your mind towards the Reality, which is behind and beyond all this world play, this show of vanishing names and forms. The mind begins to move towards the Eternal Reality even though physically and mentally you continue to live in this material world, you continue to function in this phenomenal process, yet, deep within you, in your Spirit, you become established in Supreme Divine Reality.

And thus, the four great practices which beloved and Holy Master Gurudev Swami Sivanandaji proclaimed as pillars of Divine Life are selfless service, devotion and worship, daily, unfailing regular meditation and constant spiritual enquiry, discrimination and investigation into the nature of the Reality which is behind and beyond this world of vanishing names and forms. The way of Divine Life which leads to inner spiritual unfoldment and God-experience and grants you supreme bliss, peace and illumination is the way of selflessness and selfless service. It is the way of devotion and daily Worship. It is the way of disciplining the mind and controlling the senses, withdrawing the mind from being scattered amongst the external objects of this world and concentrating the mind and meditation. It is the way of ceaseless enquiry: 'Who am I? What am I? Whence am I in this universe of these perishable objects? What is my destination and goal in life and what is the nature of this universe of these perishable objects?' It is

the way of ceaseless spiritual enquiry into the real nature of this world appearance and your ultimate goal. It is the way of affirming ‘I am not this body, I am not this restless mind, I am not this limited, finite intellect. I am that innermost being, the Supreme Atman, nameless and formless, unborn, undecaying, deathless and imperishable, eternal, one and non-dual. I am Satchidananda’. This is the way of Divine Life. But, if you wish to enter into this spiritual way of Divine Life of selfless service, daily worship, regular meditation and ceaseless enquiry, discrimination and self-realization, you have to observe three principles in your conduct and character, and your day to day vyavahara, day to day life in the secular world. These three principles form the very foundation and basis of this Divine Life of service, worship, meditation and God-realisation. These three principles are therefore indispensable prerequisites for the practise of the Sadhana of Divine Life.

The first principle is kindness and compassion towards all creatures. You must be a Cosmic benefactor. Ceaseless love, kindness and compassion must flow out of your life. Never hurt anyone, never hurt even the least of God’s creatures either by thought, word or action. Even in dream, you should not think of harming or hurting any creature. This sublime principle of non-injury, of harmlessness has been given a very great place in the eternal Vedic Way of life, that proclaim ‘Ahimsa paramo dharmah’. Be a centre of help, be a centre of benefit, be a centre of happiness and peace to all. Never injure, never hurt, never harm any living creature.

The second principle is: be rooted in absolute Truthfulness. Even at the cost of life, never utter falsehood, never practise deceit, never be dishonest in any of your dealings with anyone in this world. Be a man of integrity and verity. Become a man established in truthfulness in thought, word and deed. Truth is God. One who practises truthfulness

rigidly will attain God and become established in God even without much rigorous Yogic Sadhana and techniques, for God is present in this human world as the sublime principle of truthfulness.

Thirdly, and most importantly, purity of conduct and character, of self-control, chastity, a chaste look, purity of vision, purity of feeling towards all beings, Brahmacharya and overall control over the base carnal passions that exist in the lower physical aspect of your being. Thus self-control and purity of thought, word and deed, a sublime purity of character and conduct, ethical living, absolute truthfulness in all dealings and above all kindness and compassion towards all creatures—these three form the basis and foundation of such Divine Life. Ever keep in mind, the great Goal, remember God constantly with love in your heart and have absolute faith in your inseparable relationship with the Supreme Divine Being. Cultivate constant remembrance of God by seeing His invisible presence in, and through all things in this universe around you. The Lord is present as an immanent principle in all creation.

In the eleventh Chapter of Srimad Bhagavad Gita, in the wonderous and marvellous manner God gives the supreme experience to Arjuna through His Visvarupa Darsana Yoga and through that supreme vision, he has granted to us a rare and priceless treasure of this truth that God is present, immanent in this Universe and fills every speck of space and every atom of matter in this world. Thus, be constantly in a state of awareness, do all your actions as a worship offered to this ever-present Divine Presence. Dedicate all your activities to God by saying ‘Brahmarpanam; Krishnarpanam’—O Lord, all the activities of my entire life, I offer up unto Your feet as my perennial prayer of ceaseless worship. Thus, living your Divine Life, work becomes worship, to act becomes to

adore. The very living of your life becomes a prayer. Come! Arise! Move towards this great experience. Lead Divine Life in daily life and attain supreme blessedness. Even as I talk to you and you listen, you are Existence, Consciousness, Bliss Absolute, you are the ever-perfect Atman, you are Satchidananda, you are a part of God. That is your true consciousness. Living in this awareness is Divine Life.

DIVINE LIFE

Blessed immortal seekers! Glorious rays of the Eternal Divine Light! Friends! I greet you in the name of my Master, the great Master, Swami Sivananda, and I greet you in Divine Life.

To such of you who are new to this type of gathering, who have come here for the first time today, I extend my warmest welcome and I express my love and greetings—especially to the people who are attending for the first time.

In this Divine Life gathering, we make it a special point to see that our meetings are thrown open to all groups. Ours is a group which embraces in itself every group that seeks God, and we identify ourselves with all seekers, absolutely, without any thought or reservation. It is quite immaterial whether they belong to any specific religion, faith or church or not. So, here are welcome Hindus, Christians, Jews, Buddhists, Parsis, even people who have not found anything yet but who are seeking something, seeking peace, happiness, seeking a nobler way of life, seeking upliftment of soul, the improvement of their total nature—this is a group which welcomes all such seekers. Therefore the absolutely non-denominational name “The Divine Life Group”. We welcome all people who aspire for the Divine. We welcome all people who live to seek the Divine and who seek to live divinely, and therefore, in the name of Divine Life, my warmest and cordial greeting and welcome to you all once again.

WHAT IS DIVINE LIFE?

Divine Life is life lived in the awareness of your divine destiny. Divine Life is life lived in the full consciousness of your true divine nature, in the knowledge that you are not a body and a mind, but an eternal, all-pure and perfect spiritual being. That is the innermost central truth of your being; that

is the true fact of your real nature. You are divine. You are spiritual. Therefore you are imperishable and ever-perfect. You partake of the nature of the eternal and inexhaustible source of your being, viz., God, even as every ray of the sun partakes of the sun's radiant and luminous nature. As is the source, so is the emanation. Therefore, as God is divine, ever-pure and perfect, whatever emanates from Him is also divine, ever-pure and ever-perfect, is also of the very nature of indescribable bliss and supreme peace. A life lived in the awareness of this true nature of yours is Divine Life. A life constantly lived in order to express this divine nature of yours through all your thoughts, sentiments and feelings, through all your spoken utterances and, more important than anything else, through all your actions, your practical life—such is Divine Life.

This Divine Life is the great need of the world today, not only of the individuals that live in the world, but of all nations and communities, all groups of people, all races and countries that are trying to evolve in today's world. For, in such an effort to express the higher nature that is within man, lies hope of the emergence of a better world from this war-torn and troubled times of ours, from this great and eventful age filled with so much wonderful achievement and advancement, but at the same time oppressed with so much of distrust, mutual suspicion, discontent, hatred and strife. Divine Life is, indeed, the great answer—individually and collectively—to this vexing problem of world discord and the great solution to this problem of a total breakaway from spiritual values.

This Divine Life is the one message of the great Master Swami Sivananda; this Divine Life is the great way of life which he had been trying ceaselessly to spread throughout the modern world.

Divine Life is a life of divinity in practice. Divine Life is a life of our divine nature expressed in divine thoughts, divine work and divine action. It is, as it were, an expression of the spiritual man through the human man upon the plane of this physical world. This Divine Life should be lived both inwardly as an ascent into its all-full perfection, and also outwardly as beauty, as love, as goodness, as peace, as humility, as selflessness, as the spirit of service, for all these great qualities are part and parcel of the ever-perfect divine nature which lies within you and awaits to be unfolded and made manifest by your wise conscious effort.

The man of Divine Life seeks to live for a great ideal. The man of Divine Life is a peace-maker, for he beholds the essential spiritual oneness of all mankind. He knows that the one great divine essence knits all life into a great oneness and thus ever tries to see the whole world as a manifest expression of the Divine Essence, and thus deals with all with reverence and love. He sees God in man and thus seeks to live worshipfully. He seeks to give love as his worship to his immanent Divinity.

A person who practises this Divine Life, therefore, spreads love, mutual regard and respect. He works for goodwill and understanding and he ever seeks to bring greater spiritual harmony. The person living the Divine Life, wherever he goes, will make people feel the oneness of life and the spirit of brotherhood. The follower of Divine Life is a great example of selflessness and service. This is the outward aspect of the inward spiritual transformation which everyone seeks to bring about through Yoga, through practical religion, through prayer and worshipfulness, through the life spiritual.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE HUMAN BIRTH

The Supreme Self illuminates everything, but is overlooked in apparent appearances. When the great Atman

is like the absolute void—nameless and formless—there is no creation. The world is not then, and there is no universe either. There is no matter and no motion, but only absolute, ineffable stillness. There is no matter and no motion, but only Pure Consciousness. And then the Pure Consciousness sets itself into motion as an act of the Absolute Will Divine. This motion brings into being subtle matter or Prakriti, as the Indian philosophy terms it. Then, from Prakriti, the universe comes into being. From the Atman or Supreme Spirit is light. From the Supreme is desire. From the Supreme is love. From the Supreme are all the elements from ether down to water. The Supreme sustains the physical world as physical proof. Even the broad sky above and the boundless ocean around remind you of the Supreme Absolute Spirit. From the Supreme Absolute come the countless universes; yet the Pure Consciousness remains absolutely unaffected. The sun's rays fall on the pure water of the Ganges, on the ocean, on streams, pools and ponds and on dirty puddles, but the sun is not at all affected in any way by this contact. Even so, the Absolute being is totally unaffected by the later evolutes, such as the countless universes. The world and the universes, however, continue to exist because of the divine motion set by the Pure Consciousness through the Absolute Will.

Motion or energy is not different from Pure Consciousness; it is only Pure Consciousness expressed or made manifest. Motion or energy cannot exist without matter to play upon; therefore the subtle matter or Prakriti was first created.

The subtle matter, the transcendental matter or Prakriti, was whirled into motion in its three qualities and it divided itself into various grosser entities. The grosser entities became still more grosser and found themselves as different universes. From the universes were created worlds. In the

worlds, there evolved the various forms of life. The universal motion or consciousness found at last its expression in the human being, the last species to evolve upon the worlds. In the human being was created the mind. Mind thus became the most powerful agency of perception, discernment and understanding.

At first the human mind was gross—only instinctive, a little more efficient than that of the animal; but, as evolution progressed, it gradually started refining itself. When a higher stage of evolution was reached by the mind of man, there came the separate awareness of the lower mind and the higher mind. The lower mind identified itself with gross matter. The limited consciousness was thus identified, but the higher mind ever sought the eternal. It was dissatisfied with the limitation, bondage and imprisonment and thus started the quest of the discovery of the real nature of being. When that is realized, the cycle is completed, the consciousness which limited itself in the human form having become freed, having once again merged in its infinite, all-perfect, absolute, original source. This is the cycle. This is the true meaning of your human nature, of your human birth. Complete the cycle and culminate in spiritual glory. To lead the Divine Life is the secret of bringing about this achievement in a conscious way here and now.

This message becomes especially significant to you who are listening to me today, because today, the 2nd of October, is the birthday anniversary of one of the greatest of India's spiritual men of this century—one who embodied in himself such a divine life of ever seeking to reach and realize the Reality. And this man was the venerable Mahatma Gandhi. You all know the father of the Indian nation, the architect of Indian independence, the saintly man who developed the great theory and technique of non-violence—the technique of

overcoming hatred through love. He was the twentieth century version of the great and benign Buddha of three thousand years ago. Mahatma Gandhi was a living embodiment of divine life and I wish to speak a few words upon how he exemplified this divine life in his own person; and that, I think, would indeed be a very fitting tribute to him on this day of his birth anniversary.

In India there are celebrations going on right at this moment in honour of Mahatma Gandhi's birthday, for the Mahatma is still regarded not merely as a politician, but as a worshipful sage who once again revived the ancient message of the great Indian sages—the message of Dharma. Dharma implies a life based upon ethics, a life based upon prayer, a life based upon a living faith in God, a life of truth. Thus, Mahatma Gandhi was the modern representative of the great sages who gave us our cultural idealism, and in his name, I wish to place before you a little thumb-nail sketch, as it were, of the great Gandhian pattern of life.

MAHATMA GANDHI AS A SPIRITUAL SEEKER

Mahatma Gandhi said at a certain stage of his life: "Those who think me to be a politician and those who think that my business is politics have really not understood me at all. They have totally missed the real being in me. I am a seeker or nothing at all. The truth about my life is my seeking, my quest for God. Politics is only an incidental part of my life".

Gandhi was ever seeking after the great Reality and this seeking started right in his little boyhood. He was a deeply devoted son of very religious and pious parents and he got the habit of repeating Ram Nam even when he was a little boy going to secondary school, and his seeking developed and took the form of service of the living God in the poor millions of India and, as India was at that time going through a political phase, his service took the form of political agitation for the

welfare of his people. To Mahatma Gandhi it was all a part and parcel of his worship of God in and through man, in and through the suffering people of India, in and through his poor brethren, and thus it was a Sadhana to him.

Gandhi's life was based absolutely upon the ideal of truth, purity and compassion and his was the path of service. In his life we see the ideals of self-discipline, of ceaseless inward striving, of moderation, and a sublime simplicity, the parallel of which the world has seldom seen except perhaps in the life of Christ. Many have called him the modern Christ. Many have called him the modern St. Francis, the modern Buddha. He has been a source of great inspiration to the whole of the modern world and the world will hear much more about him in the decades to come in this century.

The source of Mahatma Gandhi's great spiritual force was not the great following he had, for he lived a life dedicated to poverty and he had nothing which he called his own. The source of his spiritual force was his constant unbroken contact with God. How did he maintain such contact? Through daily prayer and the Divine Name. Not a single day passed without his setting aside all activity, without his turning away from all secular activity at the hour of twilight. When the sun had set, Gandhi was found always in the middle of his little prayer group, perhaps under a spreading Banyan tree, in some peaceful spot, in the corner of some compound or on a little wooden platform or stage, totally oblivious of the rest of the world and totally merged in a wonderful peace and sweetness of inward communion with God.

His prayer meetings were extraordinary. The vision of universalism in his approach to God was something of an object lesson to every one. His prayer contained portions of the Koran recited in Arabic, portions of the Zendavesta of the Parsis recited in their own Persian tongue, portions of

Japanese prayer recited in the Japanese language, the Sanskrit hymns of the Vedas, portions from the Testament and the Lord's Prayer. Thus, practically every religion came to be represented in Mahatma Gandhi's daily evening prayer.

There was a period of silence and all sank into meditation. There was a group chant of the Divine Name, and then, coming out of his silence, meditation and communion, Mahatma Gandhi gave a short message of five or ten minutes to the people, and always it was filled with spirituality, vibrant with a living quality which came out of this ever-fresh contact that he maintained with the Supreme Being through such daily prayer.

Gandhi was essentially a man of prayer. He had his roots in faith and in daily prayer. He said, "Prayer is the real bread of my life. But for prayer, I would not find it possible even to live". The secret of all his great achievements, of the strenuous life which he led, was the Divine Name. The Divine Name was Gandhi's constant strength and support. He never parted from the Divine Name—the Name of Ram. To him, born as a Hindu, it was Ram, but essentially it was the Divine Name which was always on his lips and which was ever an under-current of his life, which few suspected and fewer knew; and only a few among those who knew understood its true significance.

All the activity of Mahatma Gandhi was activity centred in God by absolute detachment to the world and deep inward attachment to the Lord through love, worshipfulness, prayer and the spiritual link—the constantly repeated Divine Name. God was the ultimate value for Mahatma Gandhi in all his life. Not even political attainment, but God and God alone was the ultimate value in his life. He was the centre, He was the goal, He was the object of his quest, He was the object of all his life thus nobly lived. All this divine life of Mahatma Gandhi's was

but a constant seeking, through activity, through service of his people, through service of the Divine Spirit that he knew and felt to indwell all people.

SPIRITUALIZE YOUR ACTIVITIES

Spiritualize your activities. To live a divine life, offer all your actions—even reading, talking, playing tennis—to the Lord. Feel that the whole world is indwelt by Him. Feel that all your children are manifestations of the Lord. Serve humanity with such inward spiritual feeling. Then all your daily activities will be transformed into spiritual exercises. They will be transformed into Yoga.

Every day, side by side with your duties, you have to keep up this inward contact, this link with the Divine Source, through prayer, worship and silent meditation. This is your foremost duty. This should not be neglected on any account. Get up a little earlier in the morning and practice contemplation. Practise a few Yoga poses—do not neglect the body—and a few breathing exercises. Study sacred books. This inward silence and meditation is most important. Early morning, as the time for spiritual practice, is equally important. Silent meditation in the morning (even for a few minutes) and in the evening, at dusk, is very important. Be alert—do not neglect this.

Have a background of thought, thought of the Lord, thought of your divine ideal. Everyone has some background of thought or the other, but usually it is just worldly or sordid and material. A barrister or advocate has a background of thought filled with clients, courts, sections of the law, etc. The background of thought of a doctor is about his dispensary, injections, patients, medicines, fees. The background of thought of a grandmother is about her grandchildren and sons. The background of thought of a practitioner of Divine Life should be concerned with the glorious ideal of divine

attainment, with God, with a life of goodness, with the Divine name. Cultivate divine qualities; eradicate negative ones. Change your mental attitude towards the world, towards everything. Waste not even a single moment of your precious time. Think and talk of the ideal, of the good life, of God, of Divine Life. Live for God. Spread the message of Divine Life to one and all you meet in the course of your daily activities. When you meet some friend, do not talk shop, rather ask what type of meditation is being done or the latest spiritual literature being studied—let this be your conversation. Let everything about you be noble and divine. Let everything about you be lofty. Give up idle gossiping. Abandon novel reading. Idle gossiping and novel reading will not give you mental peace. They disturb your mental equilibrium. They fill your mind with unnecessary, painful, worldly thoughts. Fill your mind, instead, with lofty divine thoughts. Let your inward being glow with divine radiance. Let purity permeate it. Remember always that this world is one of pain and old age and death and that your foremost duty is to complete the cycle, to realize God, to realize the Self, where alone you can find direct peace, eternal joy, eternal light.

Gird up your loins and apply yourself to the living of this Divine Life. Be a practical seeker. You will attain immortality. You will enjoy supreme peace, eternal joy. There is no doubt about it.

May God bless you all with health, long life, peace, prosperity, eternal bliss, success in all your undertakings, brilliant career, all-fullness and supreme divine blessedness, supreme felicity.

ELEMENTS OF DIVINE LIFE IN A NUTSHELL

I will close now with a little song in which the Master sums up the elements of divine living, of Divine Life and the virtues which one should cultivate in order to support Divine Life.

The elements of Divine Life are purity, selflessness, spirit of service, love (love of man and love of God), regular meditation, inward life, and ultimately, realization of the Absolute. Therefore, the Master sings about Divine Life:

“Serve, love, give, purify, meditate, realize,
Be good, do good, be kind, be compassionate.
Inquire ‘Who am I?’, know thy Self and be free.
Serve, love, give, purify, meditate, realize,
Be good, do good, be kind, be compassionate.”

That is Divine Life in a nutshell for you. Herein we have a remedy, a wonderful panacea, a cure-all for this worldly bondage, for death and re-birth. But then, when you take medicine, you also have to keep some rules regarding your diet. And here is the diet—the “Song of Eighteen Ities”:-

Serenity, regularity, absence of vanity,
Sincerity, simplicity, veracity,
Equanimity, fixity, non-irritability,
Adaptability, humility, tenacity,
Integrity, nobility, magnanimity,
Charity, generosity, purity.

Practise daily these Eighteen Ities,
You will soon attain immortality.
Brahman is the only real entity,
Mr. So-and-so is a false non-entity.

You will abide in infinity and eternity,
You will behold unity in diversity;
You cannot attain this in the university,
(You can attain this in the Forest Academy).

Practise these divine virtues. They will support you living of the Divine Life. They will support your interior spiritual life. For, without virtues, your life is dry; without virtues, your life is useless and cannot provide a proper field for the play of your divine nature. It is by conquering determinedly (and

with full faith in God and in His power to help you) all the negative aspects of your life and making your whole personality a field for the play of all virtues that you afford full scope for the divine light to manifest in you and then to radiate through you. Live such a divine life. Make yourself an embodiment of these divine virtues. Completely conquer your lower nature and thus make yourself a perfect channel and instrument for the outflow and the radiance of the Divinity centred within you. Such is Divine Life.

May divinity infill you. May Divinity inspire you and guide all your actions. May your entire life be a wonderful and a radiant example of divine living. This is my request to you all. This is my earnest urge to you all. Live divinely, my beloved friends, live divinely. Live as you truly are, not as you have deluded yourself into thinking, by forgetfulness of your divine nature. Assert your divine nature and become wonderful flowers, beautiful flowers radiating divine beauty and divine fragrance, spiritual fragrance, in the garden of the Supreme.

May God bless you. May the Indweller inspire you. May Master Sivananda shower his blessings upon you. May all the sages of East and West, of the past as well as the present, ever back you up with their spiritual blessings and lead you on to the ultimate glorious goal of Realization—radiant realization of your glorious divine nature.

I once again thank you for having given me this wonderful opportunity of being amidst you and thus offering my worship through these few words to the God who is invisibly present amidst you, and to each one of you, my beloved fellow seekers. Ever be united. Ever be together—think together, seek together, work together and act together. Feel as one, and through such unity and fellowship, may untold blessings come for all those who come into your contact.

May you all become a great centre of divinity, a great

centre of spiritual awakening to countless people, and may you become a great centre of concord, harmony, unity, and a great example of oneness and brotherhood, and may you spread the joy of divine living throughout the whole world in the years that stretch before you.

DIVINE LIFE

We have been trying to know about Gurudev's life and his teachings, what he taught us. One of the very, very important, most significant insight that Holy Master Swami Sivanandaji brought into our life and into our understanding is the truth that the spiritual striving, the Yoga-Sadhana cannot be diverted from daily living. You cannot treat them as two things apart having no interconnection. They cannot be treated as watertight compartments. It is impossible that what is going on here has no relevance there. Because, whatever striving you make, whatever Yoga, whatever prayer, whatever meditation or worship you make is within the framework of your life you are living. You are engaged in your spiritual Sadhana within the framework of that life itself, it is the scope of your Sadhana. Your daily life is the receptacle or the ground on which your Sadhana is to rest. So these two are inextricably and inseparably bound up together and are closely interconnected; whatever you are doing in living your daily life has necessarily its effect on your inner life, on your Sadhana life. Also, whatever Sadhana you are doing in the inwardness of your own spiritual subjectivity has its impact on your daily living. If the inner spiritual life you are living within the spiritual interior of your own subjectivity, does not have a corresponding effect on your outer, normal, day-to-day living, then you better sit up, and take a second look at yourself. There is something fundamentally wrong. Something has been wrong somewhere. The Guru will not be able to tell you what. God may try to make you aware of it in direct and indirect ways, but he does not come and correct you. Therefore, it is upto you to take a look at yourself, with very great seriousness, earnestness, sincerity, impartiality and total honesty, and find out what is wrong. If I am entering into that vast silence, that

vast Peace in my meditation why do I not have the same peace when I come out of meditation and relate myself to the life around me? What has gone wrong? Why do I not project that Peace outside? I am talking about only one quality of the great Reality. It implies various qualities, fundamental among them are Purity, Truth, Compassion, Sat-Chit-Ananda, Joy, Cheerfulness and Auspiciousness. That is an expanded blessed state of the mind when you are content to be alone, you do not require anything to be added onto you, you are full. When you are alone, company of your own self is more than enough for yourself. You have no desire, no inclination to come out of yourself and to get into some company or relationship. Our scriptures call it Swatmarama Avastha or the state of abiding and rejoicing in the Self. This is your permanent ground. This is your continuous, unbroken normal state. Let this grow and you will overcome all your problems.

You cannot burn an incense stick and yet not have the room filled with its fragrance. If no fragrance is there, there must be something wrong with the incense stick. It is not a genuine one. Right from the ancient times down to the medieval age, the spiritual ministers; the great devotees and the mystics have given their Experiences and teachings in songs. In this great land, there have been innumerable such devotees and mystics. All of them have reiterated the same truth and spiritual values. If you have a genuine, authentic spiritual life, if you are a real Sadhaka, a devotee of the Lord, your interior life must have its inevitable influence and impact on every thought, word and action in the living of your day-by-day life. And that is the test for you. If there is a dichotomy between your outer life and inner life something is wrong. Find out its reason. Reflect upon it: "If my interior life is genuine and honest, authentic and real, then why is the link, the relationship not there? I am really a wonderful child of God. I

am with God inside. But the moment I come in contact with God's other children, I become something else, something different. So either there is something wrong with my interior spirituality or: with my external normal dealings with God's world and God's creatures. Why the two behaviours are not connected ? Why there is a sort of a break?"

Holy Master Gurudev Swami Sivanandaji regarded the living of your daily life as important, if not more important than the practice of your spiritual Sadhana. He gave, not without any reason, a very significantly true message of 'Divine Life'. His institution is **The Divine Life Society**, its magazine is **The Divine Life** and he gave the name **Divine Life** to his message. He did not call it this Yoga or that Yoga or transcendental meditation or any other name. This name that he gave has very much relevance, very much connection and relationship with your life. Gurudev regarded the living of your life equally important as the practice of your spiritual Sadhana, your Yoga, Vedanta and meditation. Perhaps he regarded the former more important than your spiritual life. Because if your life, your daily living is proper, then alone your Sadhana will proceed unhampered and be progressive and it will yield fruits, and it will go on yielding fruits. You don't have to wait till it culminates in spiritual Realisation. It would go on yielding fruits right now. It would go on giving flowers and yielding fruits step by step. So Gurudev called it Divine Life. If your life is lived rightly, your Sadhana will be fruitful, progressive and effective. If your life is not lived rightly, the fruit or result will not be commensurate with your effort —much effort but little fruit. How can you afford to do that? How much time you have in your life span to go on doing such effort? No one knows. We are here now, but what moment we will not be here God only knows. Therefore we cannot afford to make a lot of effort in spiritual Sadhana without getting the desired results. Your

Sadhana must yield fruits. So Gurudev rightly laid great emphasis on our day-to-day life.

Gurudev was very fond of giving analogies in support of intricate truths. He enjoyed it greatly, one such analogy is :

There were some merry-makers who had consumed more liquor than that was good for them. So they were high. They went out for a rowing trip to some place a little away further down the river. They went out on a hot summer night, expecting to reach the destination at the dawn. With all the preparations they came to the river side and boarded a boat. They went on rowing, singing cheerfully in expectation of reaching the great destination. When it was twilight, they were in great spirit thinking that they would soon be reaching the destination. Then they saw some persons coming towards the river for taking the bath, they started shouting: "We have reached, we have reached." But someone said, "All these people look familiar."

They asked someone, "Which is this place?" The villager rebuked, "Don't you recognise your own village ?" A merry-maker argued, "We are rowing for such a long time and how is it that we have not reached our destination ? How can we be stationary at the same place ?" So the wise man explained, "Your boat is tied to a tug in the post. You cannot make any progress unless you untie your boat."

In the same way, the spiritual Sadhana will not bring you nearer to the destination, if you do not, first of all untie the bonds of impurities of Kama, Krodha, Lobha, Moha, Mada, Matsarya, desires, jealousy, hatred, anger, hostility, greed, delusion, untruthfulness, dishonesty. Our efforts will be like the oil-man's bullocks moving on and on from dawn to dust and yet remain at the same place without making any progress whatsoever. If we do not untie ourselves, make us free from

all the impurities before launching into spiritual Sadhana either we are trying to deceive ourselves or the people, or we are very, very unwise, thoughtless, foolish. The great scriptures say, the essence of spiritual life is gradually becoming like That whom you adore, whom you are trying to Realise, whom you are meditating upon. A meditator must gradually become transformed into the object which he is meditating upon. If the object is the ultimate Reality that is All-good, All-noble, All-perfect, Absolutely Pure, Bliss Absolute, the Sadhaka must also become Good, Noble, Perfect, Pure, Holy, Godly. Vedanta declares *ye īeefJeod ye īewJe YeJeeple* “The knower of the Brahman becomes Brahman Itself” (Mundakopanishad 3/2/9). If you really want to worship God, you must become God-like, you must become a god. Then only you can connect yourself with Him and worship Him. The essence of worship is connecting yourself with the Divine Reality and moving towards It, approaching It and entering into It. Ultimately all Sadhana is connecting yourself with the Reality, approaching It and entering into It. If you want to connect yourself with the supreme Reality, there must be something in you similar to That. Then alone there can be a point of contact, and you can have relationship with God. To worship It, we must already have within us, at least to some degree, the nature of the supreme Reality. ‘It is no use quoting Vedanta saying, ‘I am an Amsha, a part of God, I am already divine, why should I have anything to do?’ This is no good. This is at best, a second-hand knowledge from the scriptures or lectures. This was perhaps the main reason why Gurudev called his gospel ‘Divine Life’ and did not call it this type of meditation or that type of Vedanta or this type of Yoga or that type of Sadhana, or Kriya Yoga or super-Sadhana. There are so many schools, so many teachers who give specific types of meditation or Sadhana or Yoga and all that. India is full of them. But then,

no one seems to realise the importance of emphasising upon life, emphasising upon living the life in a noble, pure, godly, sublime way. This is more than half of all spirituality, all Sadhana. Once you become well-established in a good and noble life, in a pure and holy life, in a life full of kindness, compassion, sympathy, understanding, forbearance, forgiveness pardon, then that life itself has already taken you on the spiritual path. It is like a perfectly prepared field prepared by a farmer for sowing after removing stones and woods, cleaning, ploughing, manuring. If he sows seeds in such a ready field within no time the sprouts appear and he yields a good harvest. If the ground is not prepared, you all know the biblical analogy of the sower of the seeds³¹.

Therefore, Gurudev gave equal emphasis on life as he gave on Sadhana. Sadhana will be in vain unless supported by a spiritual life, Yogic life, holy life.

Gurudev’s emphasis on holy and spiritual life is very well depicted in Narsi Mehta’s poem. The gist of the Gujarati poem is:

O Lord! Even if I keep religious observances,
Even if I take food only once a day,
Yet if anger, jealousy, revenge do not vanish from my mind
Then all these are in vain, in vain.

Even if I visit the temple daily,
And adore the deity with flowers and incense
Yet selfishness, greed, attachment, egoism, arrogance vanish not
Then my worship is a mere self-deceit.

Even if I mutter prayers and do Japa all the time,
Attend Satsanga regularly and meditate for hours,
If love, compassion, kindness and joy do not become my nature
Then my spiritualism is not true.

Even If I stay in seclusion and observe Mauna,
 Practise austerity, Tapas and proclaim non-attachment, renunciation,
 Yet if my desires and Vrittis are not annihilated,
 And I have not transcended the body-consciousness
 And know not the Supreme Soul that dwells in all the beings,
 Then all is futile, all is futile.

31 A sower went forth to sow; and when sowed, some seeds fell by the way side, and the fowls came and devoured them up, some fell on stony places, where they had no much earth: And when the sun was up, they were scorched, and because they had no root they withered away. And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprung up and choked them: But other fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit, some an hundred fold, some sixty fold, some thirty fold. But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat and went his way. But when the blade was sprung up and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also. (The householder) said, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them. (The New Testament.-St. Matthew XIII).

THE VISION OF DIVINE LIFE

When devotees and visitors come here and seek the blessings of this servant, he is made to laugh, for unless God had showered divine grace upon them, unless Gurudev had richly blessed them, it would be impossible for them to journey to this part of sacred Uttarakhand—on the banks of the Ganga, amidst the Himalayan foothills—a visit which millions of people in all nooks and corners of India are yearning to achieve even once in their lifetime. If they come to Northern India, take a bath in the holy Ganga, then it is a dream come true; they feel themselves to be richly blessed, they have not lived in vain.

Therefore, I say to them: "You have all that is needed. It is now for you to utilise it, put it to your highest use. Grace you have in plenty, divinely showered by God. Blessings you have in abundance, freely extended to you by Gurudev. Now it is up to you to recognise it, and not only be wise but actively wise in applying the grace and blessings that are already part of your life."

Now, the greatest blessing that has come forth from this source that is Gurudev is the vision of divine life, is his great shining ideal of a life divinely lived, filled with a divine quality. It is the sound practical teachings of divine living—a vision, an ideal and a practical teaching. That is indeed the greatest gift, the greatest blessing.

Let compassion fill your heart. Let truthfulness rule your life and actions. Let the highest purity mark your entire being. May what you are and what you do—your being and doing-be filled with the sublime quality of purity. Adhere to truth, live in truth, act in truth, and abide in truth. Let your heart always be filled with compassion towards even the least of God's creatures—the ants, the flies and the insects, even

towards the grass under your feet.

Let *dharma* be your supreme ornament. Let the light of *dharma* effulgently shine forth from your entire life, from all your thoughts, words and actions. To live for this ideal, to ever keep striving for this ideal, even to die for this ideal—what greater privilege and honour would one ever want in this squalid life of bickering, selfishness, envy, jealousy, greed, hatred, anger, vengefulness and pettiness? What greater privilege would one ask for than to reflect God in and through their being and doing, that through their life and the living of their life, the world may behold God?

This is indeed the greatest privilege, the highest good fortune, the supreme honour. To shed selfishness and fill your minutes, hours, days, weeks, months and years with unselfishness, to fill your heart with devotion and ever be in a state of loving, devoted communion with the Supreme Reality, to be a living and moving centre of love for the Divine, what greater task could one wish for?

To be ever engaged in working upon ourselves, perfecting ourselves, subduing the senses, calming down the restless mind day after day, sitting during the serene silent hours of dawn and eventide, taking the mind inward, gathering its rays, focusing it upon the Reality and dwelling in that state of inner calmness, an inner abidance with the Divine—contemplation, meditation; to ever discriminate between the Real and the unreal, the Reality and appearance, to keenly enquire into the real nature of things, and ever be moving from being bound to a physical consciousness towards a gradual identification with the invisible, the subtle, the undying, the Real; to be ever engaged in these processes of personal spiritual upliftment, what more task would one wish to occupy oneself with?

What is there in this petty world outside? Look at the

newspapers and look at the magazines and contrast life there to the way to blessedness vouchsafed to each one of you sitting here in the presence of Gurudev in his sacred Samadhi Hall, listening to these words prompted by him. Reflect for awhile on the world outside and the doings and goings on there and compare it to where you are—its life, its atmosphere, its environment.

Sublime is this environment. Holy and sacred is this atmosphere, permeated with spirituality. It is like Satya Yuga in the midst of Kali Yuga—heaven on earth. There should be a perception of the beauty, sanctity, auspiciousness and blessedness of what has been attained. It should be appreciated and fully taken advantage of. The within should not vitiate or nullify the without.

Every day you chant: "*Namostv anantaya sahasramurtaye sahasra- padakshi-siroru-bahave; sahasranamne purushaya sasvate sahasra-koti-yuga- dharine namah* (Salutation to the Infinite Lord of a thousand forms; who has a thousand feet, eyes, heads and hands. Salutations to that eternal Being who is called by a thousand names and who wields thousands of crores of time cycles)." "*Tatsarvam, vyapya narayanah sthitah* (Whatever there is in this world both within and without is pervaded by the Supreme Being)."

Would you allow anything within you to contradict and hide this grand fact, this glorious truth of the entire universe around you? Will you become the cataract blinding your own vision? Will you become your own greatest stumbling block, or will you become your own greatest friend, greatest helper and redeemer, responding to the call "*uddharet atmanatmanam* (Let a man raise himself by his own self)? Will you cooperate with God? Will you do everything, with every nerve fibre of your being, to take the maximum benefit from this grand truth that is revealed to us for our day-to-day living?

Great indeed would be our error if we allow our psyche to come in between ourselves and God. *Mano eve manushyanam karanam bandhamokshayoh* (Mind alone is the cause of bondage and liberation of human beings). Whatever there is is from within. The help is from within; the obstacle is from within. The friend is from within; the enemy is from within. Bondage is from within; liberation is from within.

All other things—rituals, the ringing of bells, reading of scriptures, chanting of names, singing, dancing—are only to correct and transform the inside, so that from within you may come light, awakening, awareness, purity, right resolution and the overcoming of obstacles. They are meant to grant you the insights which give you the tools for working out this entire process of liberation from within your own being. That is their only meaning, significance and relevance.

Radiant Atman, all of you who are aspiring for something higher! Know this for sure—whatever you are, whatever you will be tomorrow and ultimately, will be decided by neither God nor devil, but by your interior, your own being. Therein is both the Pandavas as well as the Kauravas. Therein is Rama as well as Ravana. Therein is the radiant, effulgent sunlight, the sunrise of jnana surya, as well as the dense darkness of non-perception. All the help that we receive is for this purpose, that we may make the right choice, that we may turn in the right direction, and keep going in the right direction.

Gurudev has granted to us the vision of divine life, the ideal of divine life. He has granted us the practical spiritual teachings for this great adventure, this great privilege of divinising our life, of purposefully leading a divine life, with the ingredients of selflessness and service, devotion and worship, discipline and meditation, with ceaseless enquiry, discrimination, investigation and illumination, with the ingredients of lofty character and conduct and a strict,

unswerving abidance to truth.

Dynamically engage yourself in this great gift that has been placed before you by beloved and worshipful Gurudev, who came upon earth in order to give this supreme direction to man's life. Blessed are we who have been able to live so close in proximity and time to his divine personality.

May God speed you towards that shining goal! May God shower grace, and grant you success in that great attainment! Strive on towards the Goal Supreme and crown yourself with blessedness—not in the distant future, but right from this moment onward!"

CHAPTER - 7

YOGA AT THE HOME

YOGA AT THE HOME

We take up now the vital subject of how, being in the midst of worldly activities one may yet fulfil the supreme purpose, the spiritual purpose of life on earth. While both the secular life and the spiritual life are a part of you, it is true that the spheres of the two are different, in the sense that the secular life has its sphere outside of yourself and the spiritual life has its sphere within yourself. But then, your spiritual life does have some expression outwardly also, and wherever you are, there your spiritual life has to be. If you are in a family set-up and living the work-a-day life in the busy field of worldly activity, then your spiritual life must be there. This interior life cannot be created by bringing about visible external changes in yourself or in your circumstances. You cannot live the spiritual life better in Rome than in Vancouver. You cannot be a better spiritual man if you are living at the top of a mountain than if you are living at the foot of it. Geography cannot change it. Mere changes of external form cannot really and truly affect your spiritual life, for it is the life of the soul, and wherever you are, the inner self can be looking towards God.

Even in the holiest of surroundings, the most sacred of places, right in the tabernacle of God, if your soul is not in Him, is not lifted up towards Him, then you are not in the spiritual realm at all.

A Story From the Life of Ramakrishna Paramahansa

In various ways great Masters have tried to bring home this truth to seekers and an incident comes to my mind—a very familiar story and not too ancient. It was in the life of Sri Ramakrishna, the spiritual preceptor of the famous Swami

Vivekananda. In his early life, Sri Ramakrishna was a priest in a Hindu temple in Calcutta, then the Capital City of India. This temple was founded by a lady who was something of a small queen. The wife of a native ruler and a lady of immense riches, she had the temple built with a fabulous sum of money and endowed it with rich lands. She was a very devout lady in spite of her great wealth and affluence. Apart from her concern of looking after her property, her life was spiritual. Occasionally, she would drop in at the temple at the time of worship and sit in the sanctum. Sri Ramakrishna was a young priest at that time, perhaps twenty-four or twenty-five years of age, and on this occasion, this great lady having purified herself with a bath in the Ganges, was sitting just inside the sanctum, meditating. The worship came to a certain stage where the Deity had to be hymned with praises and glorification and, just before Sri Ramakrishna was about to burst into song, this lady said, "Would you please sing this particular song?"; and he said "Yes" and started hymning the Divine Mother. As he was singing, suddenly, he was seen to stop, turn to this great lady and give her a resounding slap on the back. And he just said, "What! Here too!" That was all and he recommenced singing. There were armed guards nearby who had followed this lady to the temple, and some of the highest officials of the temple, and all were simply stunned. Some started to tremble and one or two were thinking, "Now this man's life has come to a close. Perhaps she will order him to be bound up immediately"; but much to their surprise, just as though she were a daughter being chastised by her father, she suddenly became docile and kept quiet and began intently to attend to the song. When the song was over, the service proceeded and, at the end of the service, she came out as if nothing had happened. The officials and the guards were just waiting and wondering, "What is going to happen

now?" And the superintendent asked her, "Have you any orders? I observed what happened, but I could not step inside the sanctum, and so I could not do anything". The queen simply said, "No. There are no orders". Later on, her son-in-law, who was managing the temple on her behalf, came to hear of this incident and asked her about it. She said: "He (Ramakrishna) was perfectly right. I had asked him to hymn the Divine Mother, because it was the Mother who was enshrined there, and while he was singing, I was thinking of a law-suit coming off tomorrow at the City High Court about the estate and was worrying about it. I was not thinking of anything else—the Divine Mother or the song he was singing in Her praise. It was the law-suit which was occupying my mind, and so I had to be pulled up and he did it...It was not really he who did it, but it was the Divine Mother who did it". So this lady, even when she was in the temple, was not really in the temple, but was in the Law Court. It is what you are within yourself that determines whether you are leading a spiritual life or a worldly life, and not the place you are in. That gives the secret of living a Yogic life in and through the world.

Everything can become Yogic if you spiritualize your life, and the method of spiritualizing life has been expounded in the most glorious way in the most sacred scripture, the Bhagavad Gita. Yoga is union with the Divine and if you live your life in constant inner union with the Divine through a link of great devotion to Him, through a link of genuine love for the Supreme, then whatever you may do, wherever you may be, and in whatever manner you may be living, you are living a life of Yoga: for, you are living with God and you are at one with God in your inner life.

Such a life of at-oneness with God, such a life of conscious effort to be for ever united with Him in love and devotion, and an awareness that the whole of this life is meant

for totally consummating or perfecting such union—that is Divine Life. It is a life of Yoga. If you are consciously trying all the time to reach out towards Him in spirit, to draw nearer and nearer to Him day by day, then you are living a life of Yoga, no matter what shape your external life might take.

This spirit, then, is the most important factor in living a Yogic life. This spirit is the most essential factor which makes a life spiritual. In the light of this, we have to consider what those factors are which we can include in our daily family life which will enable us to be united with God in the interior of our being.

The Four Main Aspects of an Individual's Life

Of course, we take it for granted that the first thing is to be conscious of one's purpose in life. Ever be conscious of why you are living. Ever be conscious of what purpose you are to fulfil in life. That is the most important thing. Know that the whole meaning of life is the utilizing of its every moment to attain the supreme purpose.

You are already aware of the spiritual goal in life, knowing that in God alone true peace and happiness can be had, that in God alone all the imperfections of this mortal existence can be overcome, and that in God alone all sorrow can be transcended and the state of eternal life, immortality, freedom and fearlessness can be had. Knowing this, there has already been created in you a great urge and aspiration to live the spiritual life so as to have the Supreme Attainment here and now—in this very body. To such a person as you, when living a busy family life, difficulties come in the way; and the greatest is that so many activities clutter up your day-to-day life that there seems to be no time for the essential exercise of the spirit in the way of devotion, in the way of prayer and worship. This is one great obstacle, but it is not a very serious one, nor is it the main one.

The main obstacle is constituted by the numerous duties of your worldly life, of your secular life, which you have to fulfil. Why? Because the whole of life's set-up is economic and one has to work to earn one's livelihood. Gone are the days of inherited properties and paternal wealth, and one has to work, and this is the dominant aspect of the secular life. The secondary aspect is the domestic life. It is from the home that one goes to the professional field, day after day, and it is to home again that one comes back after the day's work is done. The third aspect is that as a responsible member in a community, one has certain responsibilities of social life to attend to—such as club life, meeting friends, etc. Lastly, each one has one's own personal, individual life.

The personal, individual life is the basis. The individual aspect of your life is the most important to you. Next comes the family life or the domestic life, where there are the different relationships between husband and wife, parents and children, brothers and sisters, etc. Then comes the professional life. It is much less important than the individual life and the family life. In fact, it is the least important, though it is indispensable from the point of view of money. The professional life has to be gone through, but it does not have any serious significance for the true life of the individual—except in some extreme cases when the profession happens to be that of a hangman or a military man who has to destroy people, and then, serious ethical and spiritual problems are created. But, for the vast majority of people, the professional side does not have any special impact upon the spiritual and the ethical side of life.

Now, in the four aspects of an individual's life that we have enumerated, how are we to ensure that spiritual idealism is given the first position?

The Sanctity of Marriage

Householders should not forget even for a moment

that marriage is a sacred thing. The sanctity of married life has to be realized in all its fullness and in all its seriousness. Marriage is a sacrament. It is not just the union of two bodies. That is the least important part of it. The husband and the wife should not think there is absolutely no love above their physical life. There is a love. Marriage is the bringing together by God (through some mysterious law which operates in this universe) of two souls in this vast, vast phenomenon called life—in this vast stream of existence where countless millions of souls are moving in their individual planes of spiritual evolution towards the Divine. Through the Grace of God, through the Divine Will, and through the operation of certain laws that govern this universal life, two souls are brought together. That is the meaning of marriage.

Through the coming together of these two souls, God means an important process to be worked out and that is the sharing of the spiritual impulse between the two. What they have earned, what they have learned, and their spiritual potential—the husband and the wife are to share. The husband is to enrich the spiritual life of the wife and the wife is to enrich the spiritual life of the husband and both are to go hand-in-hand toward the Supreme Attainment of the Divine Consciousness. That is the true, inner meaning of family life. Marriage is sacred. It is not to be treated lightly. It is not to be considered in a vulgar sense. Marriage is an alliance which is for something more than mere physical enjoyment, for something more than even the all-important purpose of the propagation of the race (though, to a limited extent, this is also a purpose of marriage). The offsprings of the husband and the wife are also to be spiritual beings, because they are other souls coming into this earth-plane to work out their own evolution. It is therefore, the sacred duty of the husband and the wife to provide an ideal home and the proper initial impulse

to these souls that come as their children. The children are to be held in trusteeship for a while until they grow up and go out into the world. The growth and development of the children will be in accordance with their own spiritual nature, with their own spiritual evolution, with their own Karma which they have brought with them; yet, the mother and the father can give a great deal from their own lives to the initial spiritual unfoldment of their children until the children attain a stage when they can themselves mind their further spiritual evolution. If healthy spiritual ideas are implanted in the young minds from the early age, they are bound to sprout forth at a later stage and bring blessedness to the children.

And, as the children are to be brought up to respect the law of celibacy, of continence, until they are actually married, so the husband and the wife should adhere to the law of continence and celibacy; and for them, this law should operate in the form of a strict moderation of marital life. Marital life should be based upon self-control, not upon indulgence. Then, the wife should regard the husband as the only partner and vice versa. The wife should not have any other male and she should not think of any other man, but should be devoted to her husband; no thought of any other man should ever cross her mind. All the rest of humanity should be to her like children—she is the great Mother. The husband must have the vow which Rama had—the vow of the single spouse. That means that the thought of another woman will never enter his mind. To him, the only woman is his wife and their marriage ties are sacred. In this way the whole family set-up becomes sacred and holy and the interior life of the spirit goes on unhampered. There is nothing in the exterior life of the being to injure the spiritual life. There is nothing in the exterior life—either in the family life or in one's personal life—to hold back or obstruct the spiritual life.

And thus, both husband and wife go in perfect harmony, and their lives, on the dual wings of exterior activity and interior prayerfulness, go to the ultimate blessed state of supreme God-consciousness—Divine Realisation. Blessedness becomes theirs, in and through their family life, wherever they are.

The Home—A Sacred Place

The home should be known to be a sacred place. The home is to be a sort of counterbalancing factor for all the bustle, for all the restless activity, of your daily professional life. The moment you leave home and go into your professional activity, your whole mind, your entire personality, is brought out. You are to be active. You are to give your attention to things of this world and, therefore, your recollectedness is lost. You are brought away from your centre so that your inner spiritual closeness to God is completely lost when you go into your professional activity—your day-to-day life. Now, when you come back home, the home life is meant to be an effective counterbalancing factor. In the home you are "Self-centred", you are recollected, you are in God. So the entire atmosphere of the home should be pervaded by a sense of God's presence. You should feel God in every nook and corner of your home. It should be a place where, the moment you enter, the mind, which in the morning was brought out forcibly due to the secular, professional activities, is once again brought back into its own. It finds rest and peace in God. God should be the centre of the home. You should not feel, "This house is mine. This home is mine"; but rather, "This is the abode of God, and here I am privileged to pause, and here I am privileged to work out my salvation, work out my liberation". This should be the attitude of both husband and wife, and it is in this attitude that the children should be raised.

The home atmosphere should not be made vulgar and

the home should not be a place which is sort of a show-piece, where you just show off your opulence or show off your superior tastes to others or show off your pride of possessions—it should not be that. Neither should it be a place where a sensual type of entertainment is indulged in, with people throwing cocktail parties, with people getting half-drunk, with jazzy music, with noise and bustle and card-play. The sanctity of the home atmosphere, the sacredness and the holiness of the home atmosphere, is of paramount importance. The home should always be kept sacred. This is essential. If the spiritual atmosphere of the home also is destroyed, then how can you find your spiritual centre? If outside there is nothing to be found, and when you come home, it is worse than the outside, then how can you build a spiritual life? This way your spiritual life is destroyed by your own hand and this should not be.

However, this spiritualisation of the home atmosphere should not be done in an eccentric fashion or in the manner of a fad or a fetish, marking you off as a superior person, way above your neighbours, but it should be graciously and simply accomplished with a spiritual naturalness adorned with humility and with thanks to God for the gift of this awareness. In the home, there should be nothing secular. In the home, everything should be spiritual. In the home, everything should be Yogic. There is enough of materialism, enough of forgetfulness and heedlessness of God all around you outside; so why should you add to it and let the home atmosphere also become vitiated? Keep God intact in the home. Let every atom in the atmosphere of the home be full of holiness, and do all that you can in order to maintain the atmosphere of the home. Keep it sacred. Keep it sanctified. Always feel the home to be a place where you can get very close to God.

Spiritual Guidance to Children

The training of the children comes next. It is a great and onerous responsibility of the parents. You are only the trustees of these souls and have no permanent connection with them—the children whom God has given to you—and you should try to do what you can in the little time they pass through your hands to touch them and make their lives more radiant for their having come to you. Therefore, the proper training of children is one of the most onerous duties, and if this is done in the attitude of being privileged to be the parent of His own children, then everything you do towards your children becomes part of your Karma Yoga, becomes part of your own spiritual unfoldment. For, by giving to them the spiritual impulse, the spiritual life, by your own ideal lives, you become the partaker of God's life, because you fulfil the great gospel of Karma Yoga, viz., selfless activity without attachment, with only love in your heart, in order to do some good to others. If you train them along the path which will take them to their eternal welfare, to true blessedness, then that is the highest bestowal that one person can confer upon another in this earth-plane.

Children are imitators. The great bestowal upon them, therefore, is the bestowal of the inspiration of your personal example. This is your great duty. The parents at home have to be ideal. Their speech, their actions in all situations, their behaviour with each other, their conduct, their behaviour in relation to their neighbours, their general behaviour—if these factors are ideal and based upon virtue and ethically perfect, then they do not have to give anything else to their children. The children get all their education just by basking under the radiance of the parental influence. This is the great Yoga of the home: to give to children the ideal atmosphere and the ideal example. It is worth more than anything else that can be

given to children, such as good clothes, good education—which are all things which touch but the superficial aspects of these souls that are under your care.

There is no such thing as 'starting too early' for your children. They may start even from the time they are one-year old. Modern wives pride themselves on disciplining the children, and even when the children are three months old, their mothers exclaim: "Oh, she knows when to expect her food. She won't whimper before that hour. She knows everything—when to cry, when not to cry; when to accept feedings and when not to accept; and if it is given before time by some baby-sitter, she will refuse it. You see, she has been trained". When you pride yourself on the training of children as regards feeding habits, why not train them right from the start in the spiritual line also? You can train them even before they are born. Even when they are within you, you can send towards these children all holy thoughts, inspiring spiritual vibrations, spiritual ideas about God, about prayer, about love; then a part of that nature will be imbibed even by the unborn child. In this way, you can influence the children beneficially right from the very beginning.

Let the little child watch the family in prayer. In such prayer, the whole family should be gathered together, and if a guest is staying with the family, then the guest also should join in. There should be a separate hour set aside for such worship and devotion in the morning and again in the evening. The day should not commence without this one hour. The creation of this time is in your own hands. It is in retiring early to bed and not being glued to TV. This is one of the things I would like to say—that to a great extent the spiritual life of children is being destroyed by the carelessness of their parents. Parents never care what the children do as long as the latter do not bother them. That is all they want; they just

do not want to be bothered with their children. If they do not want to be bothered with them, if they do not want to care for their children, if they do not want to shoulder the responsibility of training their children, why did they bring them forth at all? They should not have had any children. They should have controlled themselves. Let people marry and live like celibates. Let them not bring forth a human child. To bring forth a child and not to care for its development, particularly its ethical and spiritual development...there is no sin greater than this. For, such parents have betrayed a trust. Out of their own volition they have created a trust and betrayed it. This should not be done. The Law of Karma says retribution is unfailing.

In the modern house, what do you see? Most of the children develop their own propensities, not from the example of the father and the mother, but from what they see on the TV screen. This is warping their souls and it is addicting them to hang on to pictures that flicker upon the screen and to completely lose their individual personality. They then have no time for anything else, but are always fascinated by TV.

A Spiritual Daily Routine for the Householder

Each householder should have an ideal daily routine. The home life should not be left to itself, but taken care of. In addition to those unexpected things that come up every day—a visit of someone, a telephone call, an invitation to go out with someone—every one of you should have an accepted basic programme, a basic schedule for your daily life, which should include an hour of prayer in the morning and an hour of prayer in the evening. The prayer hour might include the reading of scriptural texts, the reading of sacred and inspiring spiritual books, a few minutes of quiet, indrawn meditation, a few minutes of actually articulated prayer, inspiring prayer. The prayer can be spontaneous; it does not necessarily have to come out of some book. Or it can be both, as there are

some very inspiring short prayers in the Gospel and also in some other books. The children should also be trained in this way.

There should also be some actual act of external worship. After all, we are embodied creatures and we wish to exercise our bodies also in devotion. When you are in a state of worship, the body also should take on the attitude of worship. You should light a candle, burn a little incense, bow before the Deity, offer supplication, ask Him to enlighten you, to fill your heart with virtue, fill your heart with divine love, goodness and selflessness, and then, bowing low and with genuflection, kneel, press down with your forehead. In this way, you have to humble yourself in the presence of God. Then, as the body genuflects, prostrates and humbles itself, the influence of those little acts has a chastening effect upon the mind. We cannot become completely heedless to these reactions of the body upon the mind and the mind upon the inner spirit. Therefore, each day, you should have an hour when you have scope for the exercise of all these several aspects of your being—for the exercise of the body, the heart and the feelings in prayer; for the exercise of the mind and the intellect in study, reflection and enquiry; and for the exercise of the spirit in inner contemplation, silence, indrawnness and meditation.

Each member of the family should have a private altar. The mother should have her own nook or little corner, where she has her own little prayer, little conversation with God, little asking for guidance, little intimate communion with God. The husband, likewise, should have a little altar for himself, and if this cannot be had, at least he must have some time for himself, when he communes with the Maker individually. And the children should be trained right from the very beginning to have such separate little corners for themselves. Just as

they have one corner for their toys, another for their books, a third for their pets, so they must have a corner for their own communion with the Most High, and if this habit is developed from childhood, then later on, they will be able to have their own independent spiritual life.

Dynamic Spirituality—Remembering God

Throughout the house you may have any number of external symbols which bring to you the thought of God. Perhaps tastefully framed mottoes: "ALL LIFE IS SACRED", "GOD IS HERE NOW", "BE GOOD, DO GOOD", "BE KIND, BE PURE", "SPEAK THE TRUTH", "NEVER HURT THE FEELINGS OF OTHERS", "SEE GOD IN ALL FACES", "TRUTH IS GOD", "GOD IS LOVE", etc. And pictures. Every day, when the householder starts from home for his work, he should have five minutes of prayer, when he should say: "Now, Oh Lord, from this Blessed Abode of Thine, where I am privileged to pass my days, I go out to worship Thee through my bodily activities, through my work. May all that I do today with body and mind be accepted by Thee as my worship, as my Karma Yoga, as my dynamic prayer". Only after uttering this little prayer should the householder leave his home.

When he approaches the office, he should do so with a worshipful attitude. Be you a steno-typist or a salesman or a drugstore assistant, be you a doctor or a lawyer or a school teacher, be you a carpenter or a mason, whatever you are, the place of work to which you go day after day to exercise your vocation or profession is to be to you a sacred temple of God and the work that you do should be the worship offered to the all-pervading Presence which is at home, which is within, which is everywhere, and which is also at the place of your work.

If you are a workshop man, at your bench you must be working with God. You must feel God working with you and,

now and then, about once an hour, you should renew this spirit. It should not be monotonous and mechanical and it should not be dull. You must renew the spirit by: "Oh Lord, accept this work as my worship of Thee. All glory be to Thee. It is Thy Grace that makes me work. This work I offer to Thee as flowers offered at the altar".

If you work in a prison, or if you are a lawyer and have to work, as it were, "on the edge of a sword", then it is very, very difficult. It is extremely difficult to be a lawyer and not to utter a falsehood, to be a policeman and not to take bribes. In such work, people have to be pitied, because they are wasting this great thing called human life. They themselves are most unfortunate, because they become enmeshed in a set-up where, even though they do not desire to do so, they do things which are unethical, unrighteous. If one is a conscientious spiritual seeker, then these professions should be given up. Or else, you should walk with a great deal of caution and with great devotion to God, constantly praying to God to keep you on the straight path. Everything has to be offered to God in worship, and worship cannot be rotten, worship cannot be crooked, worship cannot be impure, and therefore, the one rule that should govern your life is that it should be honest, based upon truth. All your activities should be based upon truth, honesty and purity. Then those activities, when offered to God in worshipfulness, become Yoga. They become Yoga anywhere, in Paris, in London, in New York, in Vancouver. The time or the age in which you dwell—be it the twentieth century or the twenty-first century—matters little. The place where you dwell—whether it is in the West or the East—matters little. What is of importance is that you look at all work as worship and see that all your activities are guided by the principles of righteousness and truth and purity. Thus your whole life becomes pervaded by the spirit of Yoga—your

personal life, your home life and your office or professional life.

During your lunch hour, try to snatch fifteen minutes for silent interior prayer and inward meditation. Get away by yourself, and if conditions are such that you cannot do so, then try to get behind a newspaper in a corner somewhere, and while pretending to read the paper, contemplate upon God for those moments. Or pretend to take a nap, close your eyes and go into prayerfulness—but do not actually take a nap! Forget the world, forget life, work, body, everything, for that time, being wholly intent upon God. This is a dynamic process. If you dip into your innermost being now and then, say twenty times a day, or once in every half an hour, for just one minute, that is enough. It is a great life-transforming process. It is dynamic spirituality and the transformation that will come upon you will in no wise be less than the spiritual transformation in a contemplative monk, for you are doing a task which is even greater than his, for he has all the proper facilities and, therefore, it is natural and easy for him to go into God. But with everything against you—when the whole atmosphere, your whole environment, all the factors that go to make up your life are totally material, externalized, and grossly secular—if, in the midst of all that, you have this thought of interiority once in a while, then the token of your love for God is so earnest, so deeply genuine, that the return for it is tenfold, one hundredfold. Therefore, try to have little minutes of deep and intent God-thought periodically during the course of your busy day. Somehow or the other, connect everything with God. Whatever you do, do it for His love, and try to speak to Him in and through your activities.

If you are a waiter in a restaurant, when you are serving someone, see God in the person who has given the order, and when taking the dish to him, take it worshipfully, as

if you are taking an offering to the altar of God. For the time being, let the table of your customer become your altar. In that way, you have to connect your every activity with God-thought and let devotion fill the heart. (This is not to be mistaken for a mere emotion, or just sentimentality, but implies actually a steadfast state of genuine worshipfulness. Strength, and not weakness, is the criterion of true devotion.)

The Curse of Fashion

Along with all this, live a simple life. It is in the simple life that mind moves upon a straight path without wavering. Whereas, it is dispersed and scattered if life is made too complex and too much filled with an accumulation of objects. Have a simple life and do not be too concerned about your physical existence, about care of your body, about your beauty, your dress.

I will tell you a simple truth: fashion is a curse. Fashion is a curse and fashion is slavery. It is a slavery subtly imposed upon you by shrewd people who have products to sell. If you have some intelligence, you will know a very deep and significant fact: the manufacturers of dress and of all things fashionable will never keep any particular style or model constant for more than one year. They will surely bring in a change, a new model, a new fashion each year, attempting to persuade you that items which you have purchased the previous year are worthless. Do you see the absurdity of it? Slavery to fashion complicates one's life beyond measure. The simple life keeps the heart simple, the mind simple, and you are able to give your mind and heart to God. In a complicated life, the mind and the heart are dispersed and the essential interior life is lost.

The Value of Time

Realise the value of time. Utilise every minute, and with great niggardliness, try to salvage every minute and add

it to your spiritual life. Do not have the habit of gossip—genteel gossip. It is one of the social qualifications—when two persons are together, they must have some gentle back-chat about a third person. If that is done, you are destroying your own life, you are wasting time. Life is time, and time is verily life. If you just fritter away precious minutes and hours in loose chatter and gossip and a little genteel scandal-mongering, it means you are robbing yourself of the most precious thing in life—the rare opportunity to attain God.

You should try to develop a little backbone. You should not be afraid to be different. You should not think: "If I am like this, if my house is run in a certain way, if the neighbours peep in, what will they think?" Why should you care what they will think? Let them think what they like. What do you care for: the opinion of God and the opinion of your own conscience or the opinion of others? Have a backbone. Have the courage to be unique in certain respects and dare to be out-of-the-ordinary. Do not think you should always conform. You must conform in the things that are necessary for the social well-being of all people; but in the interior life, you need not conform to anyone. Do that which you think is best in the eyes of God. You must have a certain degree of independent thinking and arrange your family life and your interior life in a way which you think is best and is in the light of the highest idealism.

This, in short, is the method by which you can bring the spiritual element into all of your life. It does not matter if you are of the West or of the East, if you are ancient or modern. Everyone, wherever he is, can touch his innermost being with this attitude of worshipfulness and base his life on the principle of ever moving towards God. In all that you do, move towards God. Let all actions be of such nature that will bring you nearer to God.

Some Concluding Remarks

Develop virtue as a rule in your life. Let virtue be the criterion with which you judge all your thoughts, your actions, all your speech. Is it virtuous or not? That should be the yardstick to guide you in your life. And the principle should be to move towards God—ever and ever.

Items which can go into the family schedule are some moments of calm reflection and exchange of thought between members of the family, some moments of common spiritual reading, moments of hymns and songs together. All families should have a daily custom of singing together, hymns and sacred songs learned heart.

Always have the principle of offering food to God first and then alone partaking of it—the saying of grace.

While doing her housework, the wife should dedicate everything that she does to God—washing the dishes, mopping the floor, preparing meals, everything. She should say, "O Lord, for Thy love, for Thy glory—this is worship". And the hand should do its task with love, so that you know the heart and the hand are both dedicating to God.

Then, develop an ideal relationship with your neighbour. You must be a good neighbour and all the family members should try to develop themselves into good samaritans. If there is any distress, if there is any opportunity to help, even if help is not asked, if you feel that a certain person is in difficulty, without revealing yourself, you should help. There are various ways, if you want to exercise the spirit of charity and the ideal of the good Samaritan. You can do it, even today. These things should always be uppermost in your life. So, you worship God and fulfil the ideal of Yoga, of compassion and goodness and selflessness, even through your dealings with your fellow-beings.

Let the week-ends for the family be periods of recreation as well as spiritual re-creation. Why should there be a craze to go somewhere on week-ends? Why should children want to get away? If the home atmosphere has become so ideal, so beautiful, so full of sweetness and happiness, then on week-ends, no one in the family will want to go anywhere at all. You will love every minute you live in the home, within the family, and you will not want to get away. When the family atmosphere is totally vitiated and there is no faith in God, there is no faith in His presence, when there is no devotion, when there is no love and charity, no understanding between husband and wife, between parents and children, then the children have no good example, and when this is the case, they become disobedient and careless. But if the home is ideal, with a harmonious atmosphere, with love for God as the centre of your family life, then not one of the family will want to get away from home; and the time spent at home will be solid week-ends full of spiritual gain where you put by for yourself wealth that no moth can eat away, no rust can cause to perish, and no thief can take from you. Even nuclear bombs cannot take away the spiritual wealth gained thus from living a Yogic life.

That, I think, sums up, more or less, the whole structure of a Yogic way of life in the home and in the family.

CHAPTER - 8

SATSANGA

SATSANGA

All things like status, authority, power or wealth can be obtained in this world but there is one thing which cannot be 'obtained'. It is only given by God. You can only receive it, not obtain it. No type of authority or power or status or prestige or money or any force can give this Satsanga. You can purchase the whole world but you cannot purchase Satsanga. It is only given. You can only receive it if God suddenly makes up His mind to be gracious and extends His grace upon you. Therefore if you have been given the great gift of Satsanga then be assured that there is grace present in your life and you are highly blessed. Jagadguru Bhagavadpadacharya Adi Sankaracharya, expounder of the Kevala Advaita Vedanta, who dismissed this whole visible world as Mithya (Slokardhena pravakshyami yadulaam granthakotibhih, brahma satyam jagan-mithyah jivo-brahmaiva naparah), yet when he put forward the concept of Vyavaharic Satta he recognized the reality of Satsanga and said that it is powerful enough to ultimately awaken you from this dream of Prapancha and grant you Jivanmukti. As long as you are dreaming, the awakened state is unreal to you, dream only is real. So we may talk of Brahman, but Brahman is only a vague unreality to you. Only money, land, property, house, bank-balance, motor-car, wife, husband, clothes, possessions, these only are realities. So, when you are in this dream-like world due to the sleep of ignorance, what about the reality of Brahman? It is never remembered, it is never known, it is simply a vague concept. So in this state of ignorance in the dream-like world, the Aneka and the Nama-Rupa are beheld to be real. We give great

importance to them and never feel that they are all useless husk. Even Sankaracharya is compelled to concede to the present unawakened state of the bonded soul who alone can be a Jijnasu or Mumukshu or Sadhaka.

Once you have attained your final Goal there is nothing more to be attained. So Upadesa and all that is not necessary for a realised soul. It is of no value. All the scriptures become a shopping-list. After you have purchased all the items, you throw it away; you don't bring the shopping-list back home, since you have ticked off all the items in your shopping-list. Scriptures become superfluous once you have attained the Supreme Reality. So Upadesa-sahasra, Sadhana-panchakam, Vivekachudamani, Atma Bodha, Tattva Bodha-for whom are they necessary? Not for a Jivanmukta, not for a Brahma-jnani. They are for those who are in this state of ignorance, who are dreaming the dream of this world. And so Sankaracharya had to concede a relative reality for this state of ignorance and bondage and provide for it, provide for the awakening factor. In so doing he recognised the Vyavaharika Satta of Satsanga and put it in an aphoristic verse

'satsangatve nissangatvam, nissangatve nirmohatvam, nirmohatve nischala tattvam, nischala tattve jivanmuktih.'

He connected Satsanga directly with the highest attainment of Jivanmukti. He said something very interesting. How does it bring about the Jivanmukti? Satsanga brings about Jivanmukti in a gradual way. First it creates *Nissanga—satsangatve nissangatvam*. What is this 'Nissanga' and where is its necessity? I am going to make this the subject of my talk, this concept of Nissangatva, because in showing the way of achieving Yoga even in the midst of Vyavahara, even in the midst of all your earthly activities, whether you are a Brahmachari, whether you are a Grihasti, whether you are a Vanaprasthi, as long as you are in Prapancha, as long as

you have not made Sarvasanga-parityaga and gone into pure Nirvitti, how do you solve this problem of having to constantly be in the midst of many, the world of names and forms and yet keep the One Reality as the goal? How is it possible? The world of many distracts, disperses the mind, draws it out, brings it out and scatters it; and Yoga requires that the mind should be indrawn. Just now Swamiji said '*antarmukhi bano*' (become indrawn), take the mind towards the Hridaya (heart), where there is the Atma-tattva. How can one bring about this awareness of the inner reality, in the midst of Vyavahara, in the midst of all the activities of Kartavya Karma in the Vyavaharic Jagat? When trying to instruct the Sadhak in the Vyavaharic Kshetra how does one keep up the state of Yoga?

Gitacharya Jagadguru Krishna says something similar to what Sankara Bhagavatpada said in this verse. He speaks about Nissanga. Lord Krishna says '*yogastha kuru karmani*'- Engage in action but within be in a state of constant union with the Divine. He follows it by saying '*sangam tyaktva dhananjaya*'. He says '*Bhagavan se nata jodo*' (attach yourself to the Lord). He says that at the same time you must renounce company. *Bhagavan ke sath sangh jodna aur prapancha ke sath sangh todna* (attach yourself to the Lord and detach yourself from the world). So Satsanga must lead to Nissanga. What is this Nissanga that both Sankaracharya as well as Jagadguru Krishna want us to cultivate? *Satsangatve nissangatvam*—the result of Satsanga should be Nissanga and '*yogastha kuru karmani sangam tyaktva dhananjaya*'.

Sangha Tyaga of what? Naturally not of Vyavahara because He is trying to tell you to be active, to engage in activity, and so upon the most evident level Sangha Tyaga is of all those factors that are contrary and inimical to your inner spiritual state. We are trying to do two contrary things. We can succeed only when we at least renounce our association

with those things which are grossly undivine, grossly unspiritual. Bhagavan says two things without any ambiguity, very clearly in the 16th Chapter when He gives us the Yoga of the Daiva-asuri-sampad-vibhaga-yoga. He says that if you keep association, if you have within you Asuri Sampada you cannot attain God, because the very nature of Asuri Sampada is such that it will take you to greater attachment. Very clearly He says Daivi Sampada will give you Moksha, Asuri Sampada will take you into greater bondage.

Therefore you have to study the 16th Chapter of the Srimad Bhagavad Gita and renounce all associations with everything that has been described as Asuri Sampad in that Yoga. This is a must. This is absolute, indispensable, must for Sadhana. And out of His compassion and mercy, Lord Krishna goes one more step to make it a little easier for us. He says, generally, Asuri Sampad takes you to more bondage. We are all in the contrary states. If you want to keep inner contact with God in the midst of Vyavahara you have to resolutely turn away from the following: impure desire, unholy desire, greed, anger, timidity, egoism, 'I-ness' and 'mine-ness'- Abhimana. We have to go along the path of Sattva in Sattva Guna. You must break away from the company of Tamo Guna and Rajo Guna, develop in Sattva, progress in Sattva. There are three obstacles in Sadhana: impurity of mind, the oscillation of the mind, and Ajnana, the wrong notion that I am body, I am name and form. These three have to be overcome. Through Nishkama Karma Yoga Sadhana Mala is removed; through Sakara Saguna Bhakti-yukta Upasana, Vikshepa is overcome and through Dhyana, Deergha Dhyana and Jnana which is always there, Avarana is pierced.

So in order to remove the first obstacle, Mala, Kama-Krodha-Lobha-Moha-Mada-Matsarya, Irshya-Trishna, we have to go into Satsanga. Through Sravana, following the

instructions that you receive during Satsanga, Sad-upadesha and through Svadhyaya, gradually the mind and heart become purified. All the impurities of the mind in the form of Kama, Krodha etc., go away. The heart becomes pure, and then one becomes fit to enter into the stage of Sadhana. Ponder over the significant connection between Satsanga and Nissanga, Yogavastha inside necessitating the Sanga Tyaga with all those factors which are unspiritual, undivine, inimical and unfavourable to your progress in Yoga, progress in spiritual life, spiritual Sadhana.

THE IMPORTANCE OF SATSANGA AND GURU-BHAKTI

The two subjects, Satsanga and Guru-bhakti, are interconnected, for in a way, the devotion to the spiritual Preceptor is a specialised form of Satsanga. It is a specialised and intense form of Satsanga.

Satsanga with a Mahatma and Satsanga with the Guru

Satsanga is company of the holy; it is the company of any saint, any holy man, any Mahatma, any devotee. Satsanga, in this general sense, may be momentary. For instance, Yatris come, people come on leave to sacred places, and then they take the opportunity of their presence in a holy place to meet the holy persons in that place and have the benefit of their Satsanga. So, such kind of Satsanga is momentary in character. But, when the seeker approaches a saint for Satsanga, and later on he establishes a permanent relationship with that saint and begins to regard that saint as his spiritual guide, as his Guru, then this Satsanga assumes a special aspect. It becomes permanent, and in addition to regarding and reverencing that person as a holy man, as a man of God, the devotee has special reverence for him amounting to worship and adoration. And especially in India, it amounts to worship which is given to God Himself, because deification of the Guru is a deeply significant aspect of the mysterious relationship between the seeker and the perfected saint through whom he is trying to attain Salvation. So when this relationship is established with a saint, then you do that Satsanga with intense devotion, absolute surrender and an overwhelming spirit of dedication. You try to nullify your personality.

Only the Receptive Can Benefit by Satsanga

Of course, this has to be done when you approach

any saint. If you approach a saint and if you have to benefit by him, if you have to attain something or gain something, you have to put yourself in the position of a receiver. Even in the world of Vyavahara, let us suppose you wish to know something from a highly learned person. Supposing you go to him saying, 'I know everything;' then naturally you will have no ears to whatever that man may have to say, and therefore, even if you go to the highest scholar, the most learned man, you will come back with the same old ideas which you had with you. You would be the same man. You would not have gained even a grain of the knowledge that he possessed, because you have never had the feeling of inadequacy that 'there is some void in me; let me go; he possesses that.' Until and unless this feeling is there in a man who approaches, he cannot be a receiver, and even though the other person is there to give in the spirit of the giver, the man who went comes back empty-handed, because he has not fulfilled the conditions of a receiver. It is so when you approach any person, and it is all the more so when you approach a saint and try to take him as your Guru. Therefore, Satsanga with a saint becomes discipleship when the saint becomes the Guru; and you sit at the feet of the Guru in a special sense, as a disciple.

The Basis of Guru-disciple Relationship

Now what is the basis of this Guru-disciple relationship which is held in such great importance in the Hindu spiritual world? I give for you to remember three words, which if you keep in mind, you can get some glimpse of the spiritual psychology which is behind this important feature of the spiritual life. The first word is 'Upanishad,' the second word is 'Upasana,' and the third word is 'Satsanga.'

How do you derive the word 'Upanishad'? It means 'sitting near a person' who is illumined, so that we may receive from him the knowledge which illuminates him. So it means sitting

near a perfect master, a seer of wisdom, and trying humbly to draw that knowledge from him. It is knowledge revealed through sages at whose feet the seekers sat with devotion, receptivity and humility and thus became receivers of that knowledge. That is the content of the Upanishads, that which is got by sitting near a seer and learning from him.

'Upasana' means, more or less, the same thing. Whereas 'Upanishad' is the word which gives us the secret clue to the method of getting knowledge, to the technique of attaining wisdom, similarly, devotion to the Lord, worship of the Lord is described by the term 'Upasana.' 'Upasana' means worship or adoration of the Lord and it means literally in Sanskrit, 'having your seat close by.' It means 'sitting near,' 'sitting beside the Deity.' This shows the necessity of establishing a close contact with the supreme object of worship through which you wish to derive enlightenment.

'Satsanga' also similarly brings out more or less identical sense. It means 'being in companionship with Truth,' and similarly, 'being in companionship with those who have attuned their consciousness to the absolute Ultimate Reality, who have made themselves of the form of the Supreme Truth.' *Brahmavit Brahmaiva Bhavati.* A man who realises the ultimate Truth, becomes himself an embodiment of Truth, the visible expression of Truth; and therefore, saints and sages, men of Realisation, are the very embodiments, the very visible expressions in manifestation, of the Truth upon which their consciousness is for ever based. So when you have Satsanga, it means you sit in close companionship with Truth or with the supreme embodiment of Truth which the saint is.

These three things—Upanishads, Upasana and Satsanga—have ever been the very sheet-anchor of our spiritual life. At the highest pinnacle, at the very fountain-source of our spiritual culture, we have the Upanishads. In

the realm of devotion, we have Upasana. And Satsanga is a special form which this technique has assumed in this age, in Kali Yuga. They said, "The greatest thing in Kali Yuga and the only effective method of crossing this ocean of Samsara, this sea of delusion, is Satsanga." It is the boat that takes the soul across the sea of this phenomenal existence, and therefore great importance has been given to Satsanga, especially in this Kali Yuga. They say, Nama and Satsanga are the two factors upon which the hope of mankind rests. The hope of the seeker, the mainstay of the aspirant's spiritual life, hangs upon these twin factors of Nama and Satsanga in this iron age. So, starting with the Upanishad, and later on coming to Upasana, this supreme technique exists in the field of Samsaric life in the form of Satsanga. It is of paramount importance to the aspirants in their journey towards the Ultimate Reality.

The Importance of Right Approach

Now then, if Satsanga is the supreme factor in the unfoldment of one's spiritual consciousness, why is it that each and every aspirant that comes to a Guru does not receive the same illumination and the same mark of illumination, the same fruition of his Sadhana upon the path of Yoga? Lord Krishna lived and had his wonderful divine life in Dvapara Yuga and He was the visible manifestation of the Supreme Lord and among the people who constantly moved with Him who had His company, who spoke to Him and had dealings with Him, there were some who had the intimate knowledge of His Divine nature and became blessed, and there were some who remained unchanged and they perished in the great war which was Lord Krishna's own making. What is this wonderful thing? It is, in one word, the *approach*. The approach of the Jiva, the approach of the individual soul, is the factor that decides whether the Satsanga of a seeker becomes fulfilled

in realisation or fruitless in its barrenness. For, when the Kauravas approached Krishna, their approach was one of Dosha-drishti. They were blind to all the good that was in the Lord and their entire vision was focussed upon the seeming, apparent defects. The Lord moves with His Yoga-Maya and Yoga-Maya is the mysterious indefinable Prakriti. If our attention is focussed upon Prakriti, then the light of the Atman is lost upon us. Christ came with his wonderful life, and there were a handful who realised his goodness, and they have become immortal; and lost in oblivion are the countless people who were instrumental in crucifying Him. They saw in him a political agitator, a man who had black-magic, a man in league with the devil. That was the view of the vast multitude of people, and, therefore, for them the Satsanga of Christ was not there, it was non-existent. Even so, it is the mode of approach of the soul that decides the benefit that he can derive from the Satsanga, and we have the classical example of the mode of approach of Duryodhana. In one instance in the Mahabharata, the great Vyasa reveals the anatomy of Duryodhana's personality and, at the same time, the anatomy of Yudhishtira's personality.

The Classic Example of Yudhishtira and Duryodhana

Krishna sends both these people upon a mission. The mission that He gives to Yudhishtira is, "You try to go and get a man totally bad, completely devoid of any virtue, completely full of vices;" and He calls aside Duryodhana and says, "You try to get a person who is full of virtues, devoid of any defects." Both of them go on their mission, and after a period of time, they both come back to Krishna and approach Him separately. And with each, Krishna makes this enquiry: "Have you come back? Have you brought the man? Where is the man you went out after?" Look at the replies. Duryodhana says, "I have tried my best to find a man full of virtues and

devoid of defects, but try as much as I could—I have gone everywhere—I could not find a man who was without defect. Everyone is full of defects. If he has one virtue, he has a dozen evils. And after making a thorough search, I find that the man without the least defect is no other than myself. I am the man, and therefore I have come to you, and therefore do what you want with me." Krishna smiles and says, "This is very good. I am really glad to see a man with all virtues and no vice."

Yudhishtira comes and Krishna asks, "Where is your man?" Yudhishtira answers.... his answer has become immortal; it shows the man. He says, "O Lord, even in the worst felon, even in the man whom the world calls the worst, I find qualities which are worthy of being emulated, I find traits which are good, and therefore, try as much as I could, I could not find any person who was full of defects. Each one has got some good point. It is impossible to find a man full of defects, and I analysed myself and I find that I am so full of defects, imperfections and vices that I cannot find a more suitable man to present to you. I am the only person who can fulfil the description you have given me. So I have presented myself before you."

Use and Misuse of the Fault-finding Faculty

These are the two methods of approach. Yudhishtira's approach was the approach of the aspirant in whom the fault-finding nature is directed not outside, but within himself. Fault-finding is the worst canker that dwells in human nature. It is universal. But then, the seekers form a special class by themselves. They are not one among the many. They are a distinct fraternity who have begun to see the importance of correcting oneself and not correcting the world, who have begun to see the importance of analysing oneself and trying to improve, and not analysing the world, for if you are going

to analyse the world, thousands of lives are not enough to find out its defects. For a Viveki, the world is full of imperfection. Perfection is in the Deity, in Parabrahman. Perfection is not in the work of Prakriti. Prakriti is the very antithesis of Brahman. If Brahman is supreme perfection, Prakriti is all imperfection. If Brahman is Light, Prakriti is all darkness. The world of Prakriti is Apoorna, full of Doshas. Therefore, thousands of lives are not enough if we get ourselves caught in fault-finding. So, this faculty has to be directed towards oneself. Then only one's life gets transformed, and infinite scope is opened out to you to improve yourself and become better. But, if this faculty is turned outside, the entire world becomes to you a teacher of evil. For, that upon which you constantly fix your mind becomes the sustenance of your personality. Your personality feeds upon, and grows and develops into, those things whose mental pictures the mind holds. This is a psychological fact. If you always contemplate on perfection, if you contemplate on beauty, if you contemplate on peace, you grow into the likeliness of perfection, beauty and peace. If you hold before yourself thoughts of imperfection, ugliness and gloom, you will find everything so. If you always think of the biting cold of the Himalayas, the beauty of the snows will be lost for you. You see the beauty of the Full Moon day, but if at the same time you are thinking of the other side of the moon, that circle of intense blackness, blackness will be in your mind and heart and not the radiance of the Full Moon. The fault-finding nature is the greatest obstacle, because it for ever ties down the seeker to his lower Prakriti, to his defective Prakriti and he takes with him to the feet of the Guru, into the sanctuary of Yoga, into the pure spiritual path, that nature of the mind which has made him ever tied down to the lower sensual life of defects; and if this mind is taken to the sacred sanctuary of Yoga, instead of becoming the receiver of light, he will become

the hugger of darkness, for he has taken hold of his Prakriti and he would not allow himself to let go out of it, and what happens? The light of the Guru, the light of Yoga, is completely barred out of his head, because his impregnable wall of Dosha-drishti is within him, and-therefore, to ward off that danger, the ancients gave him the Upadesha:

**Yasya deve parabhaktih yatha deve tatha gurau,
Tasyaite kathita hyarthah prakasante mahatmanah.**

To that great soul in whom there is extreme devotion to the Highest Divinity, God, and equal devotion to the Guru as there is to God, to that soul all the truths of the scriptures become revealed. And therefore, deification of the Guru has been specially put as a condition prerequisite for approaching the spiritual preceptor in order to avoid this grave error of Dosha-drishti in the aspirant. If this error is removed, the iron wall is removed between the seeker and the perfected sage, and the grace of the Guru begins to flow to the disciple. You immerse a stone in the sea for ten thousand years, yet at the end you will find that the stone is the same stone which it was ten thousand years ago. The millions of tons of water that flowed on it did not change it, because it had made itself completely impervious to the influence of water. It is this nature of the aspirant, where he is satisfied with his own little knowledge and little personality, with all its self-assertive nature, with all its Rajasic tendency of clinging to its own pre-conceived notions, to its own pet conceptions-it is this that is the greatest bar to the fruition of Satsanga into the highest Sat-darshan. As long as the aspirant would cling firmly to his own old nature and refuse to admit the need of a change in himself, so long the Satsanga becomes absolutely barren of result. The aspirant must effect a change of attitude. He must accept, "I know less, the Guru knows more; I know less, and the saint has something to give me which I do not know." That

attitude is the greatest requisite for the fruition of Satsanga.

The Ego and Its Destruction

Now we go to the very root of the spiritual knowledge of the scriptures. What is Jnana Yoga? What is Bhakti Yoga? What is Karma Yoga? What is Raja Yoga? The very root of the whole question of spiritual realisation and emancipation lies in the theory of ignorance. They say, ignorance is the root. How does ignorance manifest in the individual soul? As Ahankara, as egoism. The root of the whole problem is the ego in the individual soul, and the moment the ego is removed, whatever is shines forth in all its splendour. That is your essential nature. That is Satchidananda. To remove the ego is the prime purpose of all Yoga. "When shall I be free? When 'I' ceases to be." When the ego-sense ceases to be, there is complete annihilation of I-ness and mine-ness and the Jiva attains salvation. He enjoys Atmic consciousness. Kaivalya Moksha is then and there for the being in whom the sense of 'I' gets completely annihilated. It is not necessary for him to go into a higher realm. Then and there salvation is attained by him. The bar to Knowledge, Atma-jnana, is the ego-sense, and ego-sense manifests variously. It manifests as ignorance, clinging to the body, 'I am this body,' 'I am the mind,' 'I am the senses.' Adhyasa is the mistaken identification of the all-perfect Self with the body, mind, Pranas and senses. So, remove Adhyasa by identifying yourself with the supreme all-pervading Truth. Again and again hammer into the mind the idea, "I am the Atman." That is the process of Vedanta. Therefore, break this aspect of ego which is there as Adhyasa, false identification.

As emotion, as attachment (this is mine, *Mama, Mama Iti*) ego manifests itself. In order to remove this manifestation of the ego as attachment, they said, "Attach yourself to the Lord." This is Prema Marga. *Tvameva Mata Cha Pita Tvameva,*

Tvameva Bandhuscha Sakha Tvameva; Tvameva Vidya, Dravinam Tvameva, Tvameva Sarvam, Mama Deva-deva. Thou alone art everything to me. There is no attachment for anything on this earth. All my mind is completely tied to that which is my own, my nearest, my dearest. That is the sublimation of the ego in its expression as attachment, as love, as affection.

And then, this ego is also found in another aspect of personality, as superimposition, super-arrogation, pride, taking credit for everything, *Abhimana*—"I have done that, I am a master

of the Vedas, I have attained proficiency in that science." In everything man begins to take *Abhimana*, and entertain the feeling, "I am the doer, I am the possessor of everything." Crush this *Abhimana*. "I am nothing, I do nothing. Everything is being done by the Lord. *Hari* is the *Kartha*. Everything is being done by the power of the Lord. I am only an instrument." *Nimittamatram Bhava Savyasachin*, says the great scripture, Gita, which shows man how to act without doership and attachment. Therefore, completely dedicating yourself to the Lord, saying, 'I am not the doer, I am only an instrument, everything is being done by Him,' you should work in the world. This is Karma Yoga.

Thus, Jnana Yoga removes the manifestation of the ego as *Adhyasa* or false identification, Bhakti Yoga sublimates the ego as emotion and attachment, and Karma Yoga destroys the ego as *Abhimana*. What does Raja Yoga do? For all these manifestations of the ego, mind is the root cause. Therefore, destroy that mind. What is the first manifestation of the mind on the surface? The subconscious mind is full of latent *Samskaras*. There you cannot go. What is the prime aspect of the mind which manifests itself on the surface? The conscious mind, the *Vritti*, ideation, mentation. The subtle *Vasana* which is latent inside as impression becomes manifest

as idea. As soon as the idea comes, chop it off. Immediately smash it and put it down. *Yogaschitta-vrittinirodhah*. Yoga is the destruction of the modifications of the mind. Completely annihilate all the ideas that arise in the mind, and that is done by deep meditation, complete concentration. Many ideas go on cropping up in the mind. Make them lesser, make the field of the *Vasanas* lesser, and then make them into one idea, and ultimately that idea also should go. Raja Yoga is the technique of completely rooting out the mind, which is the field for the manifestation of the ego in all its various aspects as *Adhyasa*, *Mamata*, attachment, *Abhimana*, etc., and when the mind is destroyed, the ego will go away. That is Raja Yoga. Asana, Pranayama, etc., are only preparations for concentration and meditation.

So, what important truth all these things reveal? The great enemy of man is the ego. The great enemy of man is the sense of 'I,' with all its countless ramifications. Everything that holds him down to ignorance and *Samsara* is nothing but the various *Vikaras* of the root cause, *Ahankara*, and all branches of Yoga ultimately aim only at the removal of *Ahankara*, and *Ahankara* is removed if *Satsanga* is carried out. *Satsanga* is a wonderful technique where this root process is automatically worked out by the influence of a higher personality, provided you have fully understood the importance of it. Yoga means the complete pulverization and eradication of the ego in all its aspects. Provided an aspirant approaches a sage with this knowledge, what will he do? He will always be on the guard to see that his ego does not assert itself. He will never do the blunder of going to the Guru with his ego intact and clinging to it.

An Illuminating Story

There is a story of a person, a *Kathavachak*, doing *Katha* in a Durbar all the year round. The king got interested

in getting himself freed from Samsara. He said, "He must be able to free me from this Samsara, I have got no peace of mind. Perhaps he will give me knowledge." On the next day he said to the man, the Kathavachak, "I want knowledge. Give me the secret of getting out of this Samsaric bondage." The Kathavachak trembled in fear. He was in a dilemma. He did not know what to do. The king said, "If you do not free me from Samsara, your job will go and your head also along with it." The Kathavachak went to his house, dejected. He had a wise daughter, who was perhaps a Yogabhrashta. She asked him, "Why are you so gloomy?" He replied, "My child, my last days have come. The king is asking me to do the impossible. The king asks me to give him that knowledge which will free him from Samsara. What do I know? I do not have that knowledge myself. I am doing Katha only, and that too to run this household. The king will take my head if I do not give him the knowledge tomorrow." The girl said, "Do not worry. You go and tell the king that the answer will be given." He said, "All right", for a dying man catches any straw in order to save his life. The girl aged eight or ten years said, "Take me to the palace tomorrow, when you go." The father went to the palace with the girl the next day. She asked him to start the Katha as usual. But hardly had he proceeded with his Katha for fifteen minutes, when the silence of the Durbar was broken by a loud wailing noise. All people were wondering who was crying. The girl was crying at the top of her voice, "Please release me, please release me." She was fastening herself tightly to a pillar. All people tried to disentangle her from the pillar, but could not; she was holding the pillar tightly and crying, "Release me, release me." The king got angry and he asked, "What a silly girl you are! What do you mean? You are yourself catching hold of the pillar and you are asking us to remove you." Immediately the girl burst into laughter. The king asked,

"Why are you laughing?" The girl replied, "I am laughing, because that is exactly what you are asking my father to do. You are catching hold of the palace, you are attached to the palace, to your property, your status, and you want him to release you from something which you yourself are clinging to." The king was satisfied with the answer of the girl. He learned a lesson. A man does not get released by another. He has to release himself.

Satsanga Becomes Fruitful Only When the Ego is Shed

You have to let go what you are clinging to. So it depends upon the aspirant himself to let go his clinging, which belongs to his lower self, which belongs to the old unregenerate nature. If he lets go that clinging, then immediately Satsanga becomes fruitful, Guru-bhakti springs from that heart. Until then, there is no Guru-bhakti, because he is devoted to himself, he is devoted to his own little views, to his own little, so-called principles. There is no principle. There should be no 'your own' and 'my own.' What is Guru's opinion, that should be your opinion. Biblically saying, "Empty thyself, and I will fill thee." This is the root meaning of this utterance: empty yourself of the ego and what all it means. And what all it means? You have the classical description: Kama, Krodha, Lobha, Moha, Mada, Matsarya. All these things have gathered round the ego. These are the spokes and the ego is the wheel's hub. So, first of all, you will have to give up clinging to your lower self, your principles. You say, 'my understanding'. Your understanding is wrong understanding, for if the seeker had rightly understood, he would be a saint. All understanding has to be offered to the Guru and we have to empty ourselves and say, "Give me understanding as you would wish me to have." Every man has got his own notions. Right understanding can come only from the Guru. Our wrong understanding, our improper vision has to be removed, and

as long as the wrong understanding and vision is kept in mind, there is no room for correct vision and correct understanding to come. Therefore they said, "*Satsangatve Nissangatvam.*" *Nissangatvam* of what you have in your mind. It is very difficult to renounce oneself. One can renounce wealth, wife, worldly life, property, house, society, everything, but extremely hard, extremely difficult it is to renounce oneself, and it is essential if the seeker has to benefit from Satsanga, if he has to become a real disciple and develop Guru-bhakti. It is only at the moment when you renounce yourself that Satsanga becomes effective, it begins to operate, you begin to have contact with Truth. Companionship of Truth comes to that man who renounces himself, because it is untruth to consider oneself as this little self, this petty personality. The moment he renounces this, then companionship with Truth starts. For him, Satsanga begins. For him only, Guru-bhakti is possible.

This, in short, is the essence of Satsanga, the renunciation of one's own self and starting companionship of the Truth that is within us and that is manifest as the Satguru and as the saint. As we have said, all saints are embodiments of the Supreme Truth. Therefore, in order to live the divine life, one has to die to one's own self. Renunciation of the inner self, this little petty self, is the secret of the fruition of Satsanga. Yudhishtira had that renunciation, Radha had that renunciation, the disciples of Christ had it. But those who do not have that, even though they live with these Avatars, live without any fruit, because they live in companionship with their own little self.

SATSANGA

Have *satsanga*, give up bad company, smoking, meat-eating and alcoholic liquor entirely. Do not develop any evil habits. Ego is very bad company. Selfishness is very bad company. Anger is very bad company. All these are bad company. All that constitutes this little barrier personality, little ego, is bad company. That is why Gurudev said: "Keep company with the inner Divinity," and giving up all other company, do your duty, fulfil your obligations—be what you are. If you are a human being it is your duty to affirm, assert and manifest actively your human nature—compassion, kindness, truthfulness. What does He want us to give up? What company does He want us to keep? This has to be pondered.

Lord Krishna says in the *Gita*: *Yogasthah kuru karmani sangam tyakta Dhananjaya* "Perform actions, O Dhananjaya being fixed in Yoga, be ever united with Me inwardly and act, having abandoned attachments."

When He says act, it means give up the *sangha* (attachments) to *tamo guna* (inactivity, inertia) and all that it implies. And if you want to know what *tamo guna* is, study the *Gunatraya Vibhag Yoga* (Fourteenth chapter) of the *Srimad Bhagavad Gita*. By the very instruction *kuru karmani*—be active, be dynamic, engage in activity, good activity, is implied. Give up the company of dire *tamas* (inertia). It will pull you down. It will hold you down.

Kshudram hridaya daurbalyam tyaktvottishtha parantapa "Cast off this petty faint-heartedness. Wake up, O vanquisher of foes!" What you have to give up is faintheartedness, negativity, depression, dejection—otherwise the mind cannot be elevated, no meditation is possible. Negative conditions drain away all energy, make you your own

problem, make you your own enemy, make you your own main obstacle, make you your own net, your own entanglement. Therefore the Lord admonishes Arjuna to become free from himself, the negative Arjuna.

Give up bad company. It does not merely mean company from outside us. There is inside bad company—our own thoughts, our own wrong emotions and sentiments, our own wrong motivations hidden motivations—other than that which is the ideal placed before us as a *sadhaka*. There should be *sooram* (courageousness) *kritagnam* (gratefulness), *dridha* (steadiness). Everything contrary is the presence of bad company. That has to be given up. Do not develop any evil habits. Anything that holds you back from spiritual progress is an evil habit. Anything that ties you down to a low state of consciousness is a bad habit. Determinedly, it should be given up.

Aalasyam manushyanam angasto mahan ripuh. One of the greatest enemies of the human individual, residing within one's own body, is *aalasya* (laziness). In this way:

*Kamah krodhascha lobhascha dehe tishtanti taskarah.
Jnanaratna apaharartham tasmat jagrat jagrat.*

"Lust, anger and greed are like three robbers residing within us. They are stealing the jewel of knowledge from us. Awake, awake, they are within you!" They are your own undoing, your own enemies. So symbolically, Jesus cast out devils. Now we have to invoke the Jesus within us to cast out the devils within us. If we do that, outer devils cannot trouble us because they are powerless. However, more troublesome are the inner devils. If there is not a state of Yoga (union with God) within, it is your devil's workshop. If the mind and the heart is not united with the Lord through constant remembrance and devotion, then the interior of your mind becomes the devil's workshop.

Therefore keep the mind elevated, learn by heart some inspiring *slokas*, prayers, *stotras*, recite them and thereby elevate the mind. Constantly give up bad company. Giving up bad company is not only a state of life but also a *sadhana* (practice). Thus we should go on giving up bad company, go on being united with the Lord inwardly everyday, and thus proceed upon the divine life path to Self-realisation or Liberation. That is the goal. Let us keep that goal ever before us and proceed undauntingly onwards—"Seek ye first the Kingdom of Heaven. Arise and follow Me. Knock and it shall be given. Seek and you shall find. Ask and you shall be given. Knock and it shall be opened unto you."